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Security Council

Seventieth year

Provisional

7526th meeting
Thursday, 17 September 2015, 10.05 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Churkin/Mr. Safronkov	(Russian Federation)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Lucas
	Chad	Mr. Mahamat Zene
	Chile	Mr. Barros Melet
	China	Mr. Liu Jieyi
	France	Mrs. Audouard
	Jordan	Mr. Hmoud
	Lithuania	Mr. Baublys
	Malaysia	Mr. Ibrahim
	New Zealand	Mr. Van Bohemen
	Nigeria	Mrs. Ogwu
	Spain	Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Ramírez Carreño

Agenda

The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2015/684)

Letter dated 15 September 2015 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2015/713)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2015/684)

Letter dated 15 September 2015 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2015/713)

The President (*spoke in Russian*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Afghanistan, Australia, Germany, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Pakistan, Slovakia, Sweden and Turkey to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Nicholas Haysom, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, and Mr. Yury Fedotov, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Thomas Mayr-Harting, Head of the delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2015/684, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security. I also wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2015/713, which contains a letter dated 15 September 2015 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council.

I now give the floor to Mr. Haysom.

Mr. Haysom: When I last briefed the Council (see S/PV.7467), I observed that Afghanistan continued to need the support of the international community, as well as the sustained attention of the Security Council, as it faced down its difficult economic, security and political challenges. I remain firmly of that view. Afghanistan's path to stability and self-reliance cannot be taken for granted. The current refugee exodus reflects the despondency of many Afghans. Afghans have clear memories of their recent but violent past, face an opaque future and now keenly monitor their environment for signs of international disengagement or, more hopefully, of domestic stabilization. A clear signal of continued international support will mitigate the uncertainty fuelling that exodus.

Shortly after my last briefing, many points of friction emerged within the National Unity Government and between the National Unity Government and elements of the political elite, driven by deteriorating security and economic conditions, among other things. Although neither of these were of the Government's making, charges of inaction and miscalculation surfaced in the media. Since then, there have been a number of positive developments, including signs of progress in the functioning of the National Unity Government. With a few exceptions, all senior-level national posts have now been filled and both the Council of Ministers and Cabinet are active. I continue to encourage President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah to finalize the appointments process, particularly those of governors, Minister of Defence and Attorney General.

The Government has also made progress in addressing the issue of electoral reforms by establishing the Special Electoral Reform Commission, which was one of the key commitments of the National Unity Government. The Commission, of which one of my deputies is a non-voting member, has already tabled its first set of recommendations. The Cabinet has proactively endorsed seven and returned three for further study. The recommendation to change the electoral system will have, in particular, far-reaching consequences for the country's future political landscape. I therefore encourage the Government to build a consensus around this issue before it makes its final decision. Electoral reforms are critical for the development of the country's democratic foundation and they should be a source of stability, bringing people together, not dividing them.

A senior officials meeting of the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework process — the first since London — was held in Kabul in early September. It was

judged by the participants to be a success. It proved to be an important element of the bridge between past donor commitments and future pledges to meet Afghanistan's need for ongoing support. The meeting, during which a new mutual accountability framework was established, provided an opportunity for the whole-of-Government to establish its commitment to a credible reform agenda. This is necessary to give confidence to donors ahead of critical meetings in Warsaw and Brussels in 2016, at which donor commitments are expected to be renewed.

It should, however, be noted that decisions to commit funds to Afghanistan beyond 2017 will be made not at these conferences in 2016, but in capitals in coming months. Before then, the Government will need to deliver on its agreed performance indicators, and most notably indicators that demonstrate that corruption is being effectively tackled. Afghanistan has benefited from exceptional levels of development assistance, even as global demands on aid budgets have multiplied. Participants at the senior officials meeting agreed on their mutual responsibility to ensure that this aid is more effectively targeted and delivered.

At the sixth Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan, held the day before the senior officials meeting, the region affirmed the need for greater economic cooperation, integration and connectivity. The logic that informs the recognition that economic growth and stability in Afghanistan benefit the entire region was universally acknowledged, as was the recognition that the problems of the region — such as the transboundary traffic in narcotics and people — cannot be resolved by one country alone.

The conflict continues to take a horrid toll on Afghan civilians. In the first eight months of 2015, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) documented the highest level of civilian casualties since it began keeping records. The monitoring of civilian casualties by UNAMA's Human Rights Unit, it should be noted, has been recognized as a model of best practice both within and outside the United Nations. I say this because its finding — notably on responsibility for the violence — have been contested by parties to the conflict.

Anti-Government elements continue to cause the majority of civilian deaths and injuries, although casualties caused by Afghan security forces continue to rise. UNAMA is encouraged by recent statements made by President Ashraf Ghani that he will take official steps to reduce civilian casualties. We trust that the Government's civilian casualty mitigation policy will incorporate all of the elements set out in UNAMA's mid-year report on the protection of civilians, in particular in relation to the transparent investigation of civilian casualty incidents. UNAMA stands ready to assist the Government of Afghanistan in this regard.

UNAMA also continues its dialogue with all parties to the conflict in order to reduce the toll of the conflict on civilians, increase protection and respect for basic human rights, and ensure humanitarian access to all parts of the country. The Mission also encourages the Government to continue its efforts to implement the national plan on the elimination of torture, and in particular urges the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment. It welcomes the stated intention of the Government to take the first steps to that end at this session of the General Assembly.

This year's conflict has been one of the most intense faced by the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). However, while they are once again proving their mettle and resilience, as a number of analysts have observed, insurgents have demonstrated a capacity to mass large numbers of fighters in isolated areas. This has challenged the ANSF's ability to maintain the ground that it occupies or to hold on to it once it has retaken contested sites. As predicated in earlier briefings, we anticipate the intensification of the violence in the country to continue through 2015.

This underscores the importance of renewing a viable peace process. As noted by the Secretary-General in his report (S/2015/684), the real progress in launching such a process was suggested by formal talks between the Taliban and a Government delegation in Murree in July. However, it appears that peace talks are on hold, first as a result of an internal succession dispute within the Taliban following the unexpected announcement of Mullah Omar's death, and secondly, as a result of a hiatus in Pakistan and Afghanistan's collaboration to create an inclusive Afghan-led peace process.

A series of bombings in Kabul in early August precipitated a spike in anti-Pakistan sentiment and a hardening of rhetoric from the Afghan Government, including the President. The President complained that the hand he had extended to Pakistan in respect

of mutual assistance in dealing with terrorism in both territories had not been reciprocated. He called on Pakistan to curtail the insurgency, notably that of the Hakkani network operating from Pakistani territory. After an exchange of high-level visits, including that of Pakistan National Security Advisor Sartaj Aziz, the level of accusation and counter-accusation has diminished and undertakings have been exchanged to renew constructive collaboration towards the ultimate objective of a stable Afghanistan.

I reiterate my call for direct engagement between the Taliban and the Government. A war-weary Afghan population is clamouring for peace and deserves it. The threats faced by Afghanistan do not all emanate from its own territory. Many of the insurgents originate from neighbouring countries. It is entitled to call for international support, particularly from the region, in dealing with them. It is the responsibility of the leaders of the region and other stakeholders to prioritize support for a peaceful and secure Afghanistan. In this regard, UNAMA calls on all neighbours to play a constructive role in suppressing the threat of terrorism, including but not limited to the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, and in promoting an inter-Afghan peace process.

UNAMA will continue to engage, in the background, with the Government, the Taliban, neighbouring countries, and the international community to promote a process that will allow Afghans to find an arrangement by which they can live in peace. With regard to an inclusive peace process, UNAMA welcomes the recent launch of Afghanistan's National Action Plan on resolution 1325 (2000), on women, peace and security, which will promote the participation of women in any national reconciliation process.

As requested by the Council, UNAMA, on behalf of the Secretary-General and in full consultation with the Government of Afghanistan and donors, has conducted an examination of the role, structure and activities of all United Nations entities in Afghanistan. Discussion clarified the needs and expectations of Afghanistan. It allowed the United Nations to examine how it could best align its own projects with Afghanistan's priorities and focus on institutional strengthening and capacity building. It is our hope that the report will be useful to the Council in its future mandate deliberations.

I conclude by expressing my appreciation to Ambassador Tanin, for whom this is the last Council debate in his capacity as Afghanistan's Permanent Representative to the United Nations. I have appreciated his advocacy for his country and his constructive engagement.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank Mr. Haysom for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Fedotov.

Mr. Fedotov: This debate is taking place just a few days before world leaders are to start discussing a visionary and transformative development agenda that links peace and security to sustainable development and highlights the centrality of the rule of law and accountable institutions. The situation in Afghanistan makes the need for such an integrated approach abundantly clear.

The recently held meeting just mentioned by my colleague Nicholas Haysom highlighted the need for effective measures to counter the narcotics trade, which is undermining the country's development and fuelling terrorism. Last year, Afghanistan accounted for an estimated 85 per cent of global opium production, and 77 per cent of global heroin production. Opium cultivation and processing remains one of Afghanistan's leading economic activities, with the gross value of the opiate economy estimated in $2.84 billion in 2014. Accounting for some 13 per cent of the national gross domestic product, the export value of opiates considerably exceeded the value of the export of any licit good and service.

Illicit drugs are supporting instability, insurgency, corruption and organized crime, while weakening State institutions and Afghanistan's overall ability to promote peace and good governance. Resolution 2210 (2015) stresses the importance of addressing mutually reinforcing, cross-cutting issues of counter-narcotics, anti-corruption and accountability.

Since I reported to the Council in December 2014 (see S/PV.7347), we have in fact seen efforts by the new Government to address opium production and trafficking, corruption and economic crime. In the face of those severe challenges, Afghanistan has sought to strengthen the effectiveness of the country's institutions, and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has endeavoured to support those steps.

Our work is undertaken in close coordination with United Nations system partners, especially the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. In

June, UNODC and the Ministry of Counter Narcotics launched the Afghanistan Drug Reporting System. The system provides access to the most up-to-date data on all available narcotics-related indicators in the country, including on eradication, cultivation, drug prices, treatment capacity, alternative livelihoods and seizures, to inform analysis, policy development and evaluation. That has helped to further reinforce the Ministry's leadership and coordination role in national counter-narcotics efforts.

Such efforts cannot be limited to law enforcement alone. In response, the Ministry has launched a national mobilization against narcotics to involve communities, civil society, the media and development agencies. UNODC supports that initiative, as well as the development of the new Afghan national drug control action plan, which will be finalized soon.

The Afghan Government has made advancing relationships with its neighbours a priority, and UNODC has continued to promote effective counter-narcotics cooperation in the region and beyond. The triangular initiative involving Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan, as well as the initiative with Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and other initiatives, have served as important platforms for regional cooperation. UNODC is also planning a high-level meeting with partners of Afghanistan and neighbouring countries, to be held in December in Vienna prior to the Paris Pact policy consultative group meeting.

Operationally, we are coordinating interventions through our Afghanistan country programme, the regional programme for Afghanistan and neighbouring countries and the programme for Central Asia, as well as the global container control programme, the maritime crime programme and the networking the networks initiative. Through the latter, UNODC is helping to develop interregional platforms for practical, real-time cooperation among law enforcement coordination centres, financial intelligence units and networks of prosecutors, so as to enable the exchange of information and criminal intelligence as well as the coordination of multilateral operations.

We are working with the relevant Afghan agencies on the cross-cutting issue of illicit financial flows. That is critical for building confidence, creating a safe and sound financial sector capable of supporting private sector-led growth, as well as enhancing Afghanistan's ability to address fraud and corruption. Our experts on countering money laundering and terrorist financing are providing technical assistance on the ground. UNODC supports Afghanistan in its stated priority of rooting out corruption by helping to review the relevant legislation and revise the national anti-corruption strategy. We are also supporting Afghanistan in the implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption.

Nevertheless, the situation remains undeniably difficult. The increase in Afghan opiate production over recent years has been accompanied by a sharp increase in local consumption. Supporting and expanding evidence-based prevention and treatment services in Afghanistan, including for HIV, remains a major challenge.

We similarly face difficulties with implementing alternative livelihoods initiatives. Although the land area under opium cultivation in Afghanistan is just 3 per cent of the total agricultural land under cultivation, there are pockets where opium plays a major role in the rural economy. Opium accounted for an average of 12 per cent of all farmers' incomes in the southern provinces last year, and accounted for almost 30 per cent of the total area of agricultural land in Helmand province. Approached holistically as part of broader efforts to create economic opportunity and modernize the agricultural sector, alternative development has the potential to break this vicious cycle.

Nevertheless, widespread international political support for alternative development has not been matched by funding. Overall gross disbursements of alternative development funds from member countries of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe accounted for just 0.1 per cent of global development assistance in 2013.

We will present the full results of the 2015 Afghanistan opium survey shortly, as our report is being finalized. Today I can confirm that the figures available at this stage clearly indicate a decrease in cultivation, especially in critical provinces. While that trend may partially reflect global heroin market self-regulation, it is nevertheless positive news, particularly in view of the results of last year's survey, which reported a sharp increase in opium poppy cultivation and heroin production in Afghanistan. Moreover, our data indicate that there has been an increase this year in the eradication of opium poppy. For example, eradication in Helmand increased from 787 hectares in 2014 to 1,747 hectares in 2015.

It is important that we acknowledge the positive steps that have been taken. We must endeavour to sustain and strengthen hard-won progress where it has been made. If we want to achieve sustainable progress, we need the steadfast commitment and engagement of the Afghan authorities and the international community. That also means that, in the face of budgetary constraints and competing global demands, Afghanistan's partners provide the resources needed to deliver meaningful, integrated and targeted support. We cannot afford to do less.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Ambassador Tanin for all his efforts and to welcome him to the United Nations family.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank Mr. Fedotov for his briefing.

On behalf of all the members of the Security Council, I would like very warmly to welcome Ambassador Tanin, Permanent Representative of Afghanistan to the United Nations. This is the last time he joins us in the Council in that capacity. We are grateful to Ambassador Tanin for his cooperation with the Security Council. We wish him every success in his future endeavours. I now give him the floor.

Mr. Tanin (Afghanistan): I would like to express my sincere congratulations to you, Sir, on your leadership of the Security Council for this month. I also thank the Secretary-General for his recent report on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2015/684), and my good friend, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, Mr. Nicholas Haysom, for his comprehensive briefing. I also thank Mr. Yury Fedotov, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, for his briefing and his presence today. I am very grateful for the role Spain is playing as the penholder of Afghanistan and for its capable work in the Security Council.

This is my last statement to the Security Council on the situation on Afghanistan, as I am leaving at the end of this month to assume my new responsibilities. As I sit in the midst of friends and colleagues in the Council Chamber, I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation, especially to those I have had the pleasure of working closely with in the past few years. I thank them for their friendship and cooperation.

In recent months, Afghanistan has experienced a challenging security situation in terms of increasing violence and heinous attacks by the Taliban and other terrorist and violent extremist groups. While the enemies of Afghanistan have failed to achieve the aim of gaining control of territories and breaking the will of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), they have continued their brutal campaign of violence and coercion trying to destabilize the country and terrorize the Afghan people. We have seen those heinous attempts in a number of highly sophisticated recent terrorist attacks, such as that of 7 August, which claimed hundreds of casualities, including women and children.

In the face of increasing violence and instability, the ANSF, which assumed full responsibility for security after the departure of thousands of international forces, have through their sacrifices, patriotism, resilience and commitment demonstrated time and again that they are ready to face the challenges posed by the Taliban and terrorist and violent extremist groups. The ANSF are at the forefront of the defence of the country and security of the Afghan people; they present a bulwark against letting Afghanistan slip back into the chaos and destruction of the vicious civil war, as happened in 1990s.

The National Unity Government is committed to making every effort to move Afghanistan on a path of stability, peace and security. The Government has reached out with the message of peace and reconciliation, not only to the Afghan Taliban, who are willing to stop fighting and join the peace process, but also to neighbouring countries. One of the first steps taken by President Ghani was to embark on a process of ending the undeclared state of war between Afghanistan and Pakistan and starting a new era of peace and cooperation. That process has been largely supported by the Afghan people and the first rounds of peace talks with the Taliban led to a surge of optimism about the prospects for peace and an end of the violence. Despite some of the apparent setbacks in the process of peace talks following the announcement of the death of the Taliban leader Mullah Omar and the benighted leadership changes in its ranks, we are hopeful that the prospect of a political settlement will not fade; however, it requires reciprocal steps, a responsible attitude on the part of all sides, mutual determination and real commitment.

The regional cooperation agenda is not limited to peace and security, but extends to the economy, development and prosperity as well, since the future of the region can be fostered and strengthened only through connectivity and greater cooperation. We all know that the stability of Afghanistan at the heart of Asia is essential to the stability of the wider region. Integrating Afghanistan as the centre of an economic hub focused on transit, transportation and trade for the next two decades remains imperative to achieving economic self-sufficiency and shared economic prosperity.

Afghanistan's vision for advancing regional economic goals — whether through its role as the Asian roundabout between the energy suppliers in Central Asia and the energy consumers in South Asia, or through the growing number of cross-border agreements to share services in health, rural development and training — is bound up with its economic agenda for the transformation decade. The sixth Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan, held earlier this month in Kabul, also elaborated further on ways to develop and consolidate partnerships towards promoting regional economic cooperation in Afghanistan and across the region. We look forward to the next ministerial-level meeting of the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process in Islamabad as another important step in strengthening confidence-building and partnership in the region.

As we approach the first anniversary of the establishment of the National Unity Government, greater attention is being paid to ensuring the effective implementation of vital reforms to strengthen economic growth, improve governance, eradicate corruption, introduce electoral reforms and protect human rights, particularly the rights of women. The promotion of good governance is a cornerstone of the Government's reform agenda. One of the central pillars of the reform agenda is to effectively tackle the scourge of corruption. The institutions created by the Government — such as the National Procurement Commission, the comprehensive reorganization and review of the Supreme Court and other measures dealing with institutions and individuals involved in corruption — are essential to the transformation of the anti-corruption efforts into practical, measurable outputs.

The efforts of the National Unity Government against corruption also include a series of important measures in dealing with the illicit drug trade, with its overall implications for the economy, polity, society and the rule of law in all parts of the country. The Government is focused not only on curbing this illicit trade, but also on tackling all financial channels that are providing the basis for criminal networks to be linked at all levels in the region and globally. In order to achieve that goal, the Government has formed an interministerial commission to clamp down on the narcotics trade and the financial corruption that goes with it.

To further the reform process, the National Unity Government has taken important steps to revise the election law and presented its reform proposal to the Government. The recommendations of the Commission include the allotting of one-third of Parliament's 250 seats to political parties, the restructuring of the current Independent Election Commission; the creation of a clear voter identification system ahead of future polling, and moving to an electoral system that divides provinces into smaller voting districts that can be easily quarantined in case of fraud. The proper implementation of that reform process would bring about necessary changes by ensuring free and fair elections in the future. In order to reflect those reforms, the election law was revised earlier this week by a presidential decree, and a calendar for the parliamentary and district council elections will also be announced in the near future.

Afghanistan's partnership with the international community has been paramount to the achievements of Afghanistan over the past 14 years, and is essential to realizing the lasting goal of peace, stability, and prosperity in the years to come. Without the engagement of the international community and the United Nations, be it in the form of aid, expertise, manpower or the sacrifices of soldiers and civilian workers, the progress seen in Afghanistan would not be possible today. The Afghan people and the Government are grateful and recognize the contributions of the international community as a whole, and particularly those of all Afghan partners.

The role of the United Nations has been pivotal in Afghanistan in the past 14 years, not only by coordinating international civilian activities for establishing peace and security, but also by supporting the Government in all areas of political stability, good governance, institution-building, aid coherence, human rights and the coordination of humanitarian needs. The Tripartite Commission and the Government of Afghanistan have embarked upon a full re-examination of the role,

structure and activities of all United Nations entities in Afghanistan. I am happy to say that Mr. Haysom and his colleagues played an important role in moving this process forward. The Commission examined the United Nations engagement in the country, with a focus on the areas where the United Nations adds the most value and with a view to ensuring that the United Nations serves to maximize the support of the international community for Afghanistan and its people.

The discussion focused on three themes: the United Nations principle of engagement, the Government's commitment and obligations and the future United Nations presence in Afghanistan. The Government is certain that the outcome of these efforts will provide the country, the Security Council and the United Nations a framework for the effective engagement of all United Nations activities and entities, including UNAMA and all United Nations agencies, funds and programmes in Afghanistan. The framework for review will allow the beginning of a new relationship between Afghanistan and the United Nations in the coming years.

The success of the transformation decade is strongly based on the constant engagement and support from our international partners, not only today but in the future. To further this goal, the agreement reached during the senior officials meeting earlier this month on a renewed mutual accountability framework is a significant milestone in Afghanistan's relationship with the international community. Afghanistan looks forward to the future conferences on Afghanistan in Warsaw and Brussels.

Although much has been gained in Afghanistan, much remains to be addressed. As President Ghani has noted, 2015 will test Afghanistan's will and capacity as a nation to address reforms across all sectors — social, economic, security and electoral. I would like to reiterate that the challenges faced by Afghanistan are many; but the country and the people have proven, time and again, that it wants peace over conflict, progress over repression, unity over factionalism, prosperity over hostility and inclusive growth over isolation.

Today Afghanistan's vibrant civil society, free media, improved social indicators and successful democratic transition of power all signal that there is significant potential to put the last three decades of devastation behind us and move forward. In order to do so, Afghanistan must protect the gains made in the last 14 years and present a united front against all agents who are working to destabilize the country. The role of our neighbours in the region, as well as of the international community, is essential in supporting Afghanistan during its transformation decade to achieve lasting peace and stability.

The President: I shall now give the floor to the members of the Security Council.

Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General Mr. Haysom; the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime at Vienna, Mr. Fedotov; and the Ambassador of Afghanistan.

Spain fully aligns itself with the statement to be delivered later by the observer of the European Union.

It is my honour to be accompanied by an important delegation from the Spanish Senate, headed by the Chair of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, who wish to have a better and first-hand understanding of the work of the Security Council.

We welcome the positive steps taken by the Government of Afghanistan since our previous meeting (see S/PV.7467) on Afghanistan in order to deal with the political, economic and security problems facing the country and to advance along the path of the reforms, which the Afghans themselves decided to undertake, a path on which they can and will continue to have the international community's support. We commend the progress made in the political transition process, which has almost been completed, with the important appointments to the leadership of the main Afghan institutions, both at the central and local levels. We encourage Afghans to complete and build upon that process.

I would like to make a special reference to the progress made in terms of electoral reform. The re-established Special Electoral Reform Commission has presented an initial package of recommendations. This is a vitally important area and we welcome the initiative of the Special Representative in giving it the priority it deserves.

The same can be said with regard to the measures taken so far to implement the reform agenda set out at the London Conference, including those relating to accountability and countering corruption. The rate of translating these reforms into concrete results has made and will make clear the level of commitment of the Government. Once again, I wish to repeat the fact that

President Ghani and the National Unity Government enjoy Spain's full support in this process, which will continue to be led and owned by Afghans themselves.

We also welcome with cautious satisfaction the positive information provided by Mr. Fedotov with regard to poppy production and crop eradication, as well as his positive assessments of the efforts made by the Afghan Government. We also share his concern and the concern of the Afghan authorities about the serious problem represented by the cultivation and consumption of narcotics in Afghanistan. Without a doubt, this is not an exclusively Afghan problem, but its serious impact on the country requires our maximum attention and support to the actions being taken by the Afghan Government.

We are concerned by the stalemate in the peace and reconciliation process in Afghanistan in the face of the promising prospects that emerged following the meeting held on 7 July in Pakistan, prospects which the Security Council immediately welcomed in a press statement (SC/11967). Since then, there has been the frustrating cancellation of a second round of contacts. We urge that the path that has been undertaken be continued as soon as possible. The support, solidarity and consultation with neighbouring countries is vital and should be made a priority. From this Chamber, we make an urgent appeal for this. We are also especially concerned that, as was pointed out by the Secretary-General in his report (S/2015/684), the attacks continue to grow in both intensity and geographic scope, and an increase in indiscriminate attacks in Kabul and other urban areas has been observed in recent months. Violence and terror, particularly when they are executed indiscriminately against the defenceless civilian population, are not, and never will be, the way forward.

We would like to express once again our support for the work and sacrifices being made by the Afghan National Security Forces in the face of the attacks by insurgents who are seeking to weaken the Government. I would like also to reiterate Spain's commitment to supporting the Afghan security forces and agencies, which is shown through our participation in the Resolute Support Mission, which provides security training, advisers and assistance.

In the area of women and peace and security, we welcome the submission by President Ghani, on 30 June, of a national action plan on resolution 1325 (2000) for 2015-2022. The plan enshrines the Government's pledges with regard to the increasing role that Afghan women are being called upon to play in the areas of participation, protection, prevention, and relief and recovery — the four pillars of resolution 1325 (2000). It is crucial to continue working in that area to achieve the full implementation of the provisions and to continue to promote and protect the rights of women and girls.

We also welcome the commendable steps taken by the Government to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children by the national armed forces, such as the signing of the National Action Plan of 2011 and the adoption of the road map. Nevertheless, much remains to be done. Children remain the most affected by the conflict in Afghanistan and continue to be recruited, detained and deprived of their rights to education and medical care. It is vital that we continue to demand accountability from those who are responsible for those and other violations against children, without forgetting those instances that, unfortunately, are still occurring within the Afghan National Police and local police forces. It is also necessary to establish child protection units in all police recruitment centres, end the illegal detention of children, and develop reintegration and rehabilitation programmes.

Lastly — and this is particularly relevant for Spain as penholder — we welcome the completion of the work of the Tripartite Review Commission — comprised of representatives of the Afghan Government, UNAMA, United Nations agencies and programmes, and donors — which, pursuant to resolution 2210 (2015), has been working in Kabul over the past several months. We welcome the comprehensive nature of the work that has been achieved and the commitment that has been demonstrated by all parties, under Afghan leadership. As the Security Council has requested, that analysis has allowed a better and great harmonization of United Nations actions and structures in Afghanistan and the activities of donors, taking into account the priorities established by the Government itself. The Commission's conclusions will feed the Council's reflections and work when the time comes to consider the extension of the UNAMA mandate.

I cannot close without expressing my deepest appreciation to Ambassador Tanin for the excellent work that he has undertaken in recent years representing his country and working for the benefit of the Organization. For Spain, it is a privilege to be the penholder on Afghanistan, and I am very pleased

that he will continue working with us within the United Nations system. We wish him our very best.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): I thank the Secretary-General for his latest report (S/2015/684) and for supplying the Council with the report of the Tripartite Review Commission on the United Nations in Afghanistan (S/2015/713, annex). I welcome the briefings of Special Representative of the Secretary-General Haysom and Executive Director Fedotov.

I would also like to pay tribute to Ambassador Tanin at his final debate. He has represented his country admirably through a period of great transition, and he leaves as Afghanistan enters its transformation decade, with full ownership of its national affairs. I wish him every success in his new role.

I would like to share the words of teacher caught up in a suicide bombing in Jalalabad — one that claimed 32 lives. Recovering in his hospital bed, the teacher said, "Death does not frighten me, but, if I die, what will happen to my children?" Those words are from a United Nations interview in April. They could have come from any parent, anywhere in the world. The echo a shared fear — a fear that our children will not grow up, safe, healthy or happy.

Sadly, as the Secretary-General's report on the protection of civilians shows (S/2015/453), that fear has yet to be eradicated for everyone in Afghanistan. Between January and the end of June, over 1,500 civilians were killed in Afghanistan; one-fifth of them were children. That violence is setting back Afghanistan's prospects for prosperity and better opportunities for all. It is damaging children's education, setting back the rights of women and girls, and making it harder to secure the political settlement so desperately needed for a stable and secure Afghanistan.

What can we do, as a Council, to support the Afghan Government and the work of United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA)? We should we maintain our focus on Afghanistan and concentrate on three things: security, politics and people.

First, we must maintain our support for the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces. As current fighting in Helmand shows, the challenge that they are facing is intensifying. But they are also showing that they are capable of meeting it, and more. I pay tribute to their bravery and sacrifice. To support the continued efforts of the Afghan security institutions, the United Kingdom is contributing $110 million each year until at least 2017, and we are proud of our commitment to the Afghan National Army Officer Academy, which graduated its first female officers over the summer. I urge Member States to continue their vital support to the Afghan National Forces.

However, security will count for little without a strong political settlement underpinning it. We welcome President Ghani's commitment to peace and the commitment made by Pakistan and others in the region to reaching a political settlement. The Murree talks in July were an important step towards that goal. Let us therefore urge all the parties to return to the negotiating table. A peace process is the only route to a secure and stable Afghanistan, and the Council should give its full support.

We should also take this chance to welcome the progress of the National Unity Government during its first year in office. The Government set out its achievements at the senior officials meeting earlier this month. Those included agreeing and sticking to a macro-economic reform plan with the International Monetary Fund, tackling impunity by re-opening the Kabul Bank fraud cases, and agreeing major new investments in power transmission.

All of those have been done in the face of challenging circumstances. There is much now to do. Let us therefore show our support to the National Unity Government and help it deliver its ambitious agenda. There are important benchmarks to measure next year, such as creating jobs — including for women — improving fiscal stability and providing better education and health services. Those will all help Afghanistan make its case for continued international support at next year's ministerial meetings and, more importantly, show that it is keeping its promises to its people.

Afghanistan's neighbours also have a clear interest in supporting the National Unity Government. Economic cooperation — including on trade, energy and infrastructure — is vital to the prosperity of Afghanistan and the region. The United Kingdom will be there to support the process, but that transformation can be achieved only if others match Afghanistan's ambition for a productive Eurasian partnership.

It is with the people of Afghanistan that I wish to conclude. For so long now, stories like those of the teacher in Jalalabad have come to typify our

impressions of Afghanistan. But for every victim, there are countless others whose stories we do not hear. Like that of Mahjabeen from Herat, who at the age of 41, with no formal education, opened her first business. She is now putting her daughter through university. Or that of Sohila, who, thanks to Save the Children, is going to school for the first time, like countless other Afghan girls. Or that of Aqeela Asifi, who just this week was recognized by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for her tireless pursuit of education for refugees.

It is the stories of these people of Afghanistan that underline why progress on security and a political settlement are so important. If we are to hear more of them, we must do all we can to support Afghanistan. We cannot allow them to be silenced.

Mr. Ibrahim (Malaysia): I join earlier speakers in thanking Special Representative of the Secretary-General Nicholas Haysom and Mr. Yury Fedotov for their respective briefings. I also take this opportunity to register our appreciation to Mr. Haysom and all members and personnel of United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for their dedication in carrying out their duties under challenging circumstances. I thank Ambassador Tanin for his splendid work and wish him success in his new capacity.

Allow me to me begin by reiterating Malaysia's firm support for the reconciliation and reintegration efforts undertaken by the Government of Afghanistan. We also commend the Afghan Government's continuing commitment and efforts to address the increasing political, economic and security challenges faced by the country. We take these as strong testimony of Afghanistan's aspiration to achieve national unity and stability, which could positively contribute to regional stability.

Malaysia is also pleased to note the encouraging progress made on the issue of electoral reform, particularly on the re-establishment of the Special Commission on Electoral Reform in July, as well as the presentation of its recommendations last month. We are also encouraged by the various strategies announced by the Afghan authorities, which demonstrate the Government's determination to undertake reforms. We urge the Government to swiftly implement the strategies, which, in our view, will further strengthen the capacity of national institutions.

With regard to the peace talks between the Government of Afghanistan and the Taliban, while it was unfortunate that the second round of talks scheduled for 31 July was postponed, the completion of the Taliban transition just two days ago has once again revived our hopes. Malaysia reiterates that a peaceful political settlement is the only way to achieve sustainable peace and stability in the country. We remain hopeful that talks will resume in the near future.

Despite the many positive and noteworthy developments, Malaysia remains concerned by the security situation in the country. As reflected in the Secretary-General's report (S/2015/684), the conflict in Afghanistan has expanded in both intensity and geographic scope throughout the reporting period. Furthermore, the significant increase in violent incidents between the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and its affiliates and the Taliban have resulted in further hardship endured by the Afghan people, as well as the loss of innocent civilian lives. In particular, children continue to be severely affected by the escalation of the conflict.

As a subscriber to the Secretary-General's Children, Not Soldiers campaign, Afghanistan has taken many commendable steps towards ensuring its national security forces are child-free. In addition to the criminalization of child recruitment for the Afghan National Security Forces, the Government is also drafting age-assessment guidelines that we hope will be endorsed soon and widely disseminated. Malaysia is, however, alarmed that during the current reporting period the conflicts in Afghanistan recorded the highest number of child casualties since the establishment of the United Nations monitoring and reporting mechanism in 2009. The significant increase in the number of attacks on schools and educational personnel is also an alarming trend, preventing access to education and a return to normalcy. In this regard, we urge the Government to maintain its commitment to the full implementation of its action plan and road map to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children.

Malaysia believes that at this stage it remains imperative for the United Nations and the international community to continue to lend their support, encouragement and assistance to Afghanistan through reconstruction and redevelopment efforts to rebuild the country. At the same time, it is vital that the political and development activities of the United Nations and

the international community be in greater alignment with the priorities set by the Afghan Government.

In that context, Malaysia is pleased to note that the work of the Tripartite Review Commission was completed successfully. The report of the Commission provided realistic assessments and important insights into the work of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the United Nations country team in Afghanistan. More importantly, the report contains constructive recommendations that are crucial to maximizing the potential of all the efforts and resources of the United Nations and the international community.

Malaysia looks forward to the deliberation and eventual implementation of these recommendations, which would enable us to then leverage the comparative advantages of the United Nations and the international community to support the reconstruction and redevelopment of Afghanistan.

Malaysia commends the positive progress achieved in the ongoing efforts to counter narcotics in Afghanistan. In particular, the significant progress made in eradicating opium cultivation and the intensified law-enforcement efforts against illicit drugs are a manifestation of the determination of the Government of Afghanistan to counter narcotics. We are also pleased to note the close cooperation between the Government of Afghanistan and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). In that context, the establishment of the Afghanistan drug reporting system is an important step towards streamlining and enhancing the coordination of ongoing efforts to counter narcotics in Afghanistan. Similarly, the National Mobilization against Narcotics initiative recently launched by the Afghan government and UNODC is also a commendable effort to address the issue of illicit drugs in a comprehensive manner by engaging all segments of society.

Malaysia is pleased that UNAMA and the Government of Afghanistan have continued to maintain a close partnership, which is vital to ensuring sustainable peace and stability in the country. We hope that these will lead to a more productive and effective collaboration within the host country, the United Nations system and the international community.

Let me conclude by reaffirming Malaysia's sincere commitment to supporting the Afghan Government in its effort to achieve peace, security and stability.

Mr. Van Bohemen (New Zealand): We thank Special Representative Haysom and Executive Director Fedotov for their briefings. We thank and extend our heartfelt congratulations to Ambassador Tanin for the work he has done for Afghanistan and for the wider membership during his time in New York. We wish him well in his new assignment.

New Zealand continues to support Afghanistan — its Government and its people — and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). Afghanistan has had to confront and to deal with very considerable challenges over the last 15 years. We commend all of those who have helped steer the country down the path from the essentially lawless State that gave sanctuary to those that brought down the Twin Towers to the much more stable State we see today.

When we remember that larger context, we can only pay tribute to the resilience of the Afghan people and their determination to hold together their country, notwithstanding their internal differences. We commend, too, Afghanistan's leaders for continuing to work through the challenges of the power-sharing arrangements that they took on for the wider good of their people. And we salute the bravery and dedication of the Afghan National Security Forces, who have taken on the challenge of securing the safety of the nation and its people.

That said, we recognize that in the current security environment, the pace of progress is increasingly difficult to sustain, as Executive Director Haysom has made clear to us. Yet, for the good of all Afghan people, particularly Afghan women, who have an essential role to play in the future of Afghanistan, that effort must be sustained.

We recognize that leadership changes have complicated dynamics within the Taliban and have made it much harder for the Government to pursue the peace process on which they have courageously embarked, despite the attempts made from within the country and from outside its borders to derail the process of national reconciliation that is essential to the achievement of a peaceful and secure future. New Zealand fully supports the Government of Afghanistan's pursuit of reconciliation, and we encourage it to stay the course. Sadly, there is now playing out a new twist in the struggle for power as the Taliban, Al-Qaida, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and other associated groups increasingly seek regional and

national ascendancy. That, too, is taking a heavy toll on the Afghan National Security Forces and the civilian population.

Meanwhile, as Mr. Fedotov has outlined in stark detail, the cultivation of and trade in narcotics and related criminality such as money-laundering, corruption and financing impose further stresses on local, regional and national governance structures. These undermine stability, security, economic and social development and the health and well-being of society in a country less able than most to cope with such pressures.

Against that background, it is important to maintain the integrity and effectiveness of the Taliban and Al-Qaida sanctions regimes. As a Council, we need to think carefully about how we can use the sanctions regime imposed by the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) to better support peace and reconciliation efforts in Afghanistan. New Zealand encourages greater use of the travel ban exemption procedures, where the purpose of the travel is to enable listed individuals to participate in peace negotiations. As Chair of the 1988 Committee, I recognize the need to ensure that the Committee's processes support such participation.

At the same time we need to be frank about those associated with the Taliban who display no genuine interest in peace but rather profit from the ongoing instability. These individuals have vested financial interests in the narcotics trade and illegal mining, and I encourage Member States to submit listing requests to the Committee in respect of such individuals and entities.

Afghanistan needs the visible and united support of this Council and the international community. UNAMA is a tangible manifestation of that support. The work of UNAMA and the delivery of well-coordinated international assistance to Afghanistan can assist the Afghan Government in laying down the political and security foundations necessary for the country to advance in a proper sustainable manner.

At the same time, we recognize that the work of the United Nations in Afghanistan — that of UNAMA and of the wider United Nations system — must be fit for purpose, coordinated and undertaken in tandem with the work of the Government of Afghanistan and the donor community. In that regard, we welcome the Secretary-General's report on the Tripartite Review Commission (S/2015/713, annex), as called for in paragraph 48 of resolution 2210 (2015), which we have just received. It will usefully inform future discussions on the role of the United Nations in Afghanistan.

Mr. Liu Jieyi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Mr. President, I wish to thank you for convening today's debate on the situation in Afghanistan. We also wish to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Nicholas Haysom, for his briefing, and the Executive Director of United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Mr. Yury Fedotov, for his statement.

The year 2015 is the first year of the 10-year transformation decade in Afghanistan. Since the beginning of the year, the Afghan Government has made an effort to maintain national stability, remained committed to promoting Afghanistan's economic development, steadily advanced the rule of law and achieved positive results. The rebuilding of State institutions and the economic and social development of the country continue to face challenges and complexities and require long-term effort on the part of various sectors within Afghanistan. Also required is the international community's assistance and support based on respect for Afghanistan's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. I would like to emphasize the following points.

First, China supports the Afghan National Unity Government in the effective exercise of authority and in the strengthening of its governance. In the nearly one year since the Afghan National Unity Government took office, positive results have been achieved in Afghanistan's political, economic and social development and in the rule of law, which is quite encouraging. However, the Afghan Government is still faced with numerous challenges in terms of State governance, and the international community should give it its due trust and support and help it to enhance its exercise of authority and capacity for governance. We hope that the different sectors in Afghanistan will strengthen the country's unity, continue to resolve differences through dialogue and consultation, and remain committed to the broad picture of national reconstruction and socioeconomic development.

Secondly, China is ready to continue to play a positive role in taking forward the Afghan reconciliation process. China has always supported this reconciliation process. We are pleased to note that the Afghan Government and the Taliban held formal peace talks

in July in Pakistan. We appreciate the efforts made by both Afghanistan and Pakistan. China hopes that the two sides, Afghanistan and Pakistan, will value and maintain the good momentum of the relations between the two countries and strengthen coordination and cooperation in the reconciliation process. China is ready to work with the relevant parties to continue to play a positive and constructive role in taking forward the Afghan reconciliation process.

Thirdly, the international community should continue to help the Afghan Government strengthen its security-building and maintain national stability. The security situation in Afghanistan remains fragile, and there have been frequent occurrences of security incidents that have brought about heavy civilian casualties. In July 2015, at the Council of the Heads of State of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, President Xi Jinping of China said that the Shanghai Cooperation Organization needed to properly respond to the Afghan situation, strengthen cooperation with Afghanistan in the security sector and help Afghan security forces strengthen capacity-building. China supports the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and other international and regional organizations in the light of the Afghan need and will continue to help Afghanistan build capacity in its security forces and police sector so as to improve its ability to respond to security threats and challenges and play a more positive role in maintaining and advancing national reconciliation and economic rebuilding. We hope that the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and other international organizations in Afghanistan will strengthen their coordination with the country and further improve their assistance to Afghanistan, thus making further contributions to solving the Afghan issue.

Fourthly, China welcomes Afghanistan's increased participation in regional cooperation. Afghanistan's peace and prosperity is in the common interests of the countries of the region, but it cannot be achieved without those countries' cooperation and shared participation. China supports Afghanistan in taking advantage of its geographic location and in strengthening its cooperation in trade, energy and interconnectivity with the rest of the region and in creating a good environment for harmonious coexistence and common development. We hope that the countries of the region will effectively respond to terrorism, drug trafficking and other common threats and challenges by strengthening cooperation. China hopes that this fifth Foreign Ministers meeting of the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process will yield positive results.

The year 2015 marks the sixtieth anniversary of diplomatic relations between China and Afghanistan and is also the Year of China-Afghanistan Friendly Cooperation. We will continue to nurture the China-Afghanistan strategic cooperation partnership and we are ready to help the Afghan Government accelerate its economic and social development within the framework of the New Silk Road initiative.

On 26 September, China, Afghanistan and the United States will jointly hold a high-level meeting on Afghan peacebuilding and regional cooperation. We welcome the active participation of all relevant parties in order to jointly contribute to the achievement of lasting peace in Afghanistan at an early date.

Mrs. Audouard (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Nicholas Haysom and Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Yury Fedotov for their briefings. I also thank the Afghan Ambassador Zahir Tanin for his statement and echo the tributes that have been paid to him and wish him success in his new role. France aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the observer of the European Union.

As highlighted in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2015/684), Afghan progress in political terms has been significant. We welcome the National Unity Government's efforts to make progress with reforms, particularly electoral reform. The recent appointments of the Governor of the Central Bank and a Judge of the Supreme Court are also important decisions. The Government's commitment to moving the peace process forward, in consultation with the countries of the region, also deserves our praise. The holding of discussions in Pakistan at the beginning of July with the main stakeholders was a positive development in seeking a lasting political solution to the Afghan conflict. In this respect, the support of countries of the region is vital to ensuring that the Afghan reconciliation process is successful and to ensuring also that conditions for sustainable development in Afghanistan are met.

But many challenges remain, particularly in terms of security. The conflict continues to spread, and the level of violence is increasing, with civilians being the primary victims. Afghan security forces have made considerable progress, seem to be more and more

in a position to deal with attacks by the Taliban, and maintain their control of Afghanistan's main urban centres. Nevertheless, their capacities need to be enhanced because the situation is still fragile in Kabul and in many provinces, as was seen in the recent Taliban attack on a prison in Ghazni province to help prisoners to escape.

With respect to human rights, it is essential that Afghan civil society and the authorities continue to mobilize, especially on behalf of women and children, who are particularly affected by this exacerbated security situation. We therefore welcome the adoption by Afghanistan of a National Action Plan on Women and Peace and Security to implement resolution 1325 (2000) from 2015 to 2022, and call on it to pursue its efforts in this field. It is also important for the international community to continue to support Afghanistan in the implementation of its commitments to protecting children in armed conflict.

The fight against narcotics and the illicit economy is also among these challenges. As noted by Mr. Fedotov, much remains to be done on this issue, which is of great concern to France as it directly threatens the security and development of Afghanistan, the health of its population and the stability of the region. We encourage the authorities to continue their work in the fight against drugs through a comprehensive approach, in close cooperation with UNODC, whose ongoing efforts we welcome. France is resolved to see the United Nations play a greater role in responding to this central challenge, particularly in the coordination of the United Nations agencies involved in the fight against drugs.

In this difficult context, the international community should not stop working to accompany Afghanistan towards greater stability, prosperity and democracy. The commitments made at the London Conference of December 2014 must be met, for Afghanistan still needs the support of its partners.

While Afghanistan has fully entered the transformation decade, the role of the United Nations is more important than ever. its role in supporting the Government remains crucial, notably to enable the population to benefit from Government programmes and international assistance. But this role must evolve and adapt. In that regard, we welcome the tripartite review and reflections being conducted jointly on the desirable development of the support that the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and the Organization can provide to countries.

France, meanwhile, will remain alongside Afghanistan in the framework of the Franco-Afghan Friendship and Cooperation Treaty and through its contribution to the European Union commitment in Afghanistan, which represents €1.4 billion over the period 2014-2020.

To conclude, I hail the efforts of all United Nations personnel in Afghanistan, who are working in difficult conditions.

Mr. Barros Melet (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank Mr. Nicholas Haysom, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), and Mr. Yury Fedotov, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

A secure, democratic and prosperous Afghanistan depends largely on the success of the reconciliation process in the framework of a comprehensive strategy to protect and promote human rights. Chile appreciates the efforts of the Government of Afghanistan to resolve outstanding differences with the Taliban through dialogue. The organization of the first official meeting between the parties on 7 July in Pakistan was a positive development. However, we note with concern that conflict and terrorist activities are on the rise, with a consequent impact on the civilian population. The Taliban must demonstrate its commitment to the peace process, renounce violence and choose the table of dialogue as the only means to advance its interests.

We are concerned about the recruitment and use of children, increased attacks on schools and the military use of children by the parties to the conflict. We believe that the Lucens Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict can provide guidance in this area. We hope that the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict will address this matter promptly, in support of the proposals laid out in the report of the Secretary-General in this regard, and we urge the Government to implement them.

The launch on 30 June of the National Action Plan for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) was a significant development. Afghan women should be an essential component in all efforts to prevent conflict prevention and build peace, and must participate in

the electoral process and institutions of law and order. The establishment of police women Councils makes a substantive contribution to this aspiration.

Political and social cohesion at the national level are essential at this important stage. While we understand that some reforms may generate discrepancies, progress towards the consolidation of democracy and peace in the country requires the constructive work of all sectors, which must come together to prevent some from seeking to take advantage of the political divisions. It is essential that the Special Electoral Reform Commission keep the consultation process inclusive and comprehensive, involving civil society and religious leaders, with the support requested of the United Nations and international organizations.

At the regional level, we support the ongoing constructive dialogue among Afghanistan's neighbours to combat terrorism and drug trafficking and its financing, and to resolve bilateral issues. It is critical to build relations based on trust and cooperation. In that sense, we also recognize the importance of coordination between UNAMA and the Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy in Central Asia and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and we appreciate the recent visit of the Secretary-General to the region.

Mr. Hmoud (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I too wish to thank Mr. Nicholas Haysom, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and Mr. Yury Fedotov, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, for their briefings. We also thank the representative of Afghanistan for his statement and wish him every success in his new appointment.

The relative improvement that we have seen in a number of areas in Afghanistan — including governance and the fight against corruption — and the efforts being made by the authorities to ensure security throughout the country are positive steps in the right direction for the development of the country. It is important, however, to maintain the achievements made to date and to build on them in the coming period through the implementation of reform programmes previously announced by the Afghan authorities. That process must be intensified, as such reforms have a significant impact on daily life in Afghanistan. We therefore urge the Afghan political class to support the implementation of the Government's reform programmes.

The upcoming parliamentary elections will be the cornerstone of the country's political future and stability. We urge the Afghan authorities to continue their sound preparatory work for the elections and to hold them as soon as possible on the basis of the internationally accepted criteria of transparency and democracy.

With the deteriorating security situation on the ground and the increase in terrorist activities that have claimed a large number of Afghan civilian victims, it is important to strengthen the capacities of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) and to offer all international assistance available. These needs must be met during this important phase in order to enhance the resilience of the ANSF, broaden their effective control of the national territory and combat terrorism.

In tandem with the security-building process under way, one element of critical importance to the country's stability is support for the Afghan political reconciliation process among all stakeholders. We call upon those stakeholders to make greater progress in order to overcome the existing obstacles and launch negotiations as soon as possible.

Despite the clear progress that has been achieved, the human rights system needs a progressive reform strategy that addresses many aspects and covers all areas, in particular those sectors of the population that have been targeted and weakened. That strategy must be accompanied by national programmes that aim to raise citizens' awareness of their rights and the laws in force. In that regard, we call upon the Afghan authorities to work to ensure accountability for all those who perpetrate crimes against human rights, in line with international law.

The work that Afghanistan is undertaking to promote and develop its relations with the countries of the region, which has recently been evident through a tangible improvement in those relations, particularly in the economic sphere, constitutes an important change that promotes joint work and will help to consolidate security and stability in the region. We therefore call upon Afghanistan's neighbouring States to support Afghanistan and to continue their cooperation with that country, in particular in terms of security, and to work to revitalize joint cooperation, especially with regard to combating drugs.

In that context, Jordan supports the activities of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and

reiterates the importance of adopting a comprehensive approach to allow the authorities to combat that problem and to step up awareness campaigns among the people, as well as to address drug users. It is important to combat all those who are fuelling that scourge and who are preventing progress in Afghanistan.

In conclusion, we appreciate the efforts being made by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, which is serving peace, and the implementation of its mandate in a competent way and in the very difficult conditions that Afghanistan is now experiencing.

Mr. Mahamat Zene (Chad) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Mr. Nicholas Haysom, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), as well as Mr. Yury Fedotov, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, for their briefings. I also thank Ambassador Tanin, Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, for his statement and wish him every success in his new capacities.

Less than a year after the presidential elections, the new Afghan authorities have devoted significant effort to political and administrative reform, national reconciliation and combating drugs, although the country continues to face those and many other challenges concerning security and humanitarian issues and the fight to reduce poverty. Chad wishes to commend the efforts of the Afghan authorities and urges them to continue the reforms already begun, including those regarding the electoral system, and calls on the international community to lend them substantial financial and technical support.

Similarly, Chad welcomes and encourage the initiatives of UNAMA, which made it possible, at a provincial level, to organize a number of meetings that brought together civil society, religious and traditional leaders and others to implement new mechanisms for dialogue and crisis resolution. Chad also welcomes the new stage reached in terms of the peace and national reconciliation process through direct negotiations between the Afghan Government and representatives of the Taliban, which was launched on 7 July in Murree, Pakistan, under the aegis of the Pakistani Government, the United States of America, China and the international community.

The fight against terrorism, extremism and drug trafficking, the challenges related to the porosity of borders and the problem of water resource management are all, inter alia, issues that require strong, full cooperation among all the countries of the region. Those issues also require multifaceted, broad support from the international community. In that regard, we welcome the convening on 8 and 9 June, in Dushanbe, of a high-level international conference that enabled the countries of the region to take important decisions with respect to security, development and, of course, water management, at a regional level. To that end, the partnership between the Government of Afghanistan and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, which aims to combat drug trafficking, should be encouraged and further supported, both at the level of capacity-building and by stepping up cooperation with neighbouring States for better coordination in the transborder fight against drugs and illicit trafficking, in keeping with the presidential statement of 25 June 2014 (S/PRST/2014/12).

The fragile security situation in Afghanistan, along with the presence of foreign fighters and elements of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, not only on its territory but throughout the region, calls for joint efforts at the regional level as well as heightened vigilance on the part of the international community. The growing number of terrorist attacks in Kabul and throughout the country, which we firmly condemn, clearly demonstrates the mobility of terrorist groups and their ability to act as spoilers, underscoring the need to reinforce the efforts of the Afghan security forces.

Chad is seriously concerned by the deterioration of the humanitarian situation and deplores the fact that civilians are falling victim to anti-personnel land mines and indiscriminate attacks carried out by the parties to the conflict and international forces. All parties must clearly distinguish between civilian targets and military ones by adhering to the principles of international humanitarian law as well as international human rights law.

By way of conclusion, Chad wishes to pay deserved tribute to all United Nations and humanitarian agency staff serving in Afghanistan in extremely dangerous conditions. We urge them to continue their work on behalf of the Afghan people.

Mr. Lucas (Angola): We thank Special Representative Nicholas Haysom for presenting the Secretary-General's report (S/2015/684) on the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). We also thank Mr. Yury Fedotov, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, for his briefing, and the Ambassador of Afghanistan, for taking part in this debate. We wish Ambassador Tanin every success in his new assignment and all the best to his country.

We commend the work of UNAMA in helping Afghanistan to turn the page on its turbulent past and to open a new chapter in the country's life — one that we hope will bring reconciliation, peace and progress. In that regard, we support the review of the role, structure and activities of all United Nations agencies, the international donor community and UNAMA and its improved alignment of work and structure. This debate provides the Security Council once again with an opportunity to assess the situation in the country and take stock of recent developments. We note with some hope that during the past three months, despite difficulties, the Government of Afghanistan has pursued efforts to handle its increasing political, economic and security challenges. That is a positive sign of the National Unity Government's commitment to peace and national reconciliation. The direct negotiations between representatives of the Afghan Government and the Taliban are encouraging steps towards an inclusive dialogue, in spite of the terrorist attacks that have occurred in the wake of the appointment of a new Taliban leader. We strongly encourage the parties to resume direct negotiations in a constructive way, with a view to reaching a permanent peace settlement.

Despite the political progress described in the Secretary-General's report (S/2015/684), the armed conflict has grown in intensity and scope, resulting in a significant number of casualties and the increased displacement of civilians. The report issued by UNAMA in August on the protection of civilians in armed conflict for the period from January to June of this year cites a figure of almost 5,000 civilian casualties, mainly victims of improvised explosive devices, suicide attacks and targeted killings. We reiterate our condemnation of any violence against civilians and call on all parties to refrain from such criminal actions.

We are also concerned about the conflict between the Government forces and rebels linked to international terrorist networks, which is producing significant displacement of the population. The clashes in eastern Afghanistan between the Taliban and other groups loyal to the Islamic State, both because of the resulting huge displacement of people and for their security implications, are also matters of great concern. The expansion of the conflict to the south, south-east and northern parts of the country, along with the ongoing hostilities and difficulty of access to the affected areas, has been a challenge to humanitarian and United Nations personnel trying to provide assistance to people in need and help the country attain greater stability and security.

We welcome President Ghani's launch, on 30 June, of Afghanistan's national action plan on Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, for 2015 to 2022. The action plan, based on the Government's pledges for increasing the role of women in society, marks the culmination of a year-long technical process and period of consultation, supported by the United Nations, aimed at establishing a framework that can ensure women's participation in the ongoing peace and reconciliation processes. Another positive development, despite some setbacks, is the continued engagement on critical issues between the Governments of Pakistan and Afghanistan. We hope fervently that the two countries will be able to reinforce mutual trust and redouble their efforts to find common ground on issues of security coordination and support for an Afghan-led peace process. Such a relationship is a critical element in the attainment of stability and peace in the region.

The information from the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime — on the fact that last year Afghanistan accounted for an estimated 85 per cent of global opium production and 70 per cent of global heroin production, that the export value of those drugs accounts for some 13 per cent of its gross domestic product and exceeds the value of the export of any legal goods and services, and that illicit drugs are supporting instability, insurgency, corruption and organized crime, weakening State institutions and the country's overall ability to promote peace and good governance — calls for renewed effort on the part of the Government and the international community to address such negative issues in Afghan national life.

Finally, we would like to pay tribute to the efforts of the Special Electoral Reform Commission in presenting an initial package of recommendations to President Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah. We

encourage the Commission to continue its work to ensure a transparent and inclusive commitment on the part of all parties involved to moving forward with the aim of restoring the confidence of the Afghan people in their institutions.

In conclusion, despite the remarkable progress that the Afghan people have made in recent years, the challenges they face are immense, and they must work to reach new levels of cooperation and understanding if the country is to succeed in overcoming its bloody and painful past. It is also imperative that the international community keep to its commitment to Afghanistan by continuing to assist it in laying the foundations for a better and more prosperous future.

Ms. Sison (United States of America): I would like to thank Special Representative Haysom and Executive Director Fedotov for their hard work in the past few months. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime are great assets to the Security Council and to the Afghan Government. We look forward to seeing their important work continue. We would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his timely letter summarizing the Tripartite Review Commission discussions (S/2015/713), and Ambassador Zahir Tanin for his remarks. I would like to take this opportunity to wish the Ambassador well. It has truly been an honour to work with him.

I would like to touch on three key areas today — strides that the National Unity Government has made over the past year and work that it still needs to do; the security and stability challenges that Afghanistan continues to face; and some important upcoming milestones that could make a genuine difference to Afghanistan's future.

Mr. Haysom's briefing today underscored the international community's united support for Afghanistan, in particular its commitment to the National Unity Government led by President Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah. Next week, the Unity Government will mark its one-year anniversary. We recognize and support the progress that the Government has made in key areas since Mr. Haysom's previous briefing (see S/PV.7467), particularly those such as making key Government appointments, fighting corruption and establishing the Special Electoral Reform Commission. The Unity Government's swift adoption of seven of the Commission's recommendations, including increasing the quota of female members on provincial and district councils to 25 per cent and strengthening voter lists, are just a few examples of progress. In that regard, I would like to express our special appreciation for the important role that UNAMA has played in supporting the work of the Commission. We should underscore that political stability in Afghanistan is critical to security.

For the Unity Government to achieve its promises of reform, however, it is essential that the President and the Chief Executive consult and coordinate fully with each other on substantial policy decisions and operate in a broadly inclusive manner. That includes engaging regularly on important policy matters with the relevant Afghan stakeholders in all areas of the country. Without outreach from the Government to all major segments of society, those who feel excluded could undermine the Unity Government and foster greater instability. In that regard, we welcome initiatives such as UNAMA's efforts to promote inclusive Afghan-led dialogue aimed at local conflict resolution and linking local and national reconciliation efforts in several provinces, including Baghlan, Bamyan and Kunduz.

Similarly, we commend and strongly support the Afghan Government's efforts to foster a peace and reconciliation process with the Taliban and other armed groups. We welcome the efforts by regional partners such as Pakistan to support that Afghan-led and -owned initiative. We continue to believe that a reconciliation process is the best way to end the violence and produce lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan. The necessary end conditions of any peace process with insurgent groups must include ceasing violence, breaking ties with international terrorist groups, including Al-Qaida, and accepting the Afghan Constitution, including its protections for women and minorities.

Afghanistan's progress in all the areas I just noted is remarkable, given the heavy toll the ongoing violence and conflict is inflicting on the Afghan people. The increase in targeted killings as the Taliban and other groups use violence to try to advance their influence constitutes a worrisome trend. The horrific terror attacks on 7 August in Kabul represent some of the worst violence we have seen in recent years. We share the concern of the Secretary-General about the continuing impact of the conflict on ordinary Afghans and about the large number of Afghan civilian casualties.

Terrorism attacks are not the only threat to peace, however. Counter-narcotics is another area where

solid progress could help to advance stability in Afghanistan. We are pleased that the Government of Afghanistan will unveil its new national drug action plan at a ministerial-level event here in New York later this month. That public high-level demonstration of Afghan political will illustrates the high priority that the Government of National Unity correctly places on counter-narcotics. The Government inherited a significant narcotics challenge that fuels corruption, jeopardizes the legal economy, furthers insecurity and undermines public health and good governance. We are therefore encouraged by the Afghan National Unity Government's renewed commitment to counter-narcotics. We also thank the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime for its tireless efforts to support the Afghan Government's efforts to counter narcotics.

Looking ahead to the coming months, there are several critical opportunities that the international community must seize to deepen its support for the Government of National Unity and the people of Afghanistant. On 26 September, we will co-host with China and Afghanistan a high-level event on Afghanistan's peaceful reconstruction and regional cooperation — an important opportunity for the international community to recommit to supporting Afghanistan as it continues its path towards stabilization and reform. The Security Council's consideration of UNAMA's mandate in March, the 2016 NATO Summit in Warsaw and the upcoming Afghanistan development conference will also be occasions on which the international community will be able to demonstrate our collective commitment to Afghanistan.

Afghanistan has come a long way but still faces challenges. We all need to show that we will continue to be good partners.

Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank Mr. Nicholas Haysom and Mr. Yury Fedotov for their briefings. I would also like to thank Ambassador Zahir Tanin for his statement, as well as to take this opportunity to acknowledge, and commend him on, his work as the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan. I wish him every success in his new responsibilities.

The holding of elections in Afghanistan a year ago and the assumption of office by President Ashraf Ghani launched a new phase in a political process aimed at overcoming the instability caused by the armed violence that rocked this brotherly country for decades and claimed the lives of countless innocent civilians. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has welcomed those achievements of the Afghan people in consolidating peace. Afghanistan needs peace and stability in order to rebuild the country.

However, we are concerned that the political momentum has recently been affected by the violence unleashed by the new Taliban leadership, as well as by the uncertainty that has been generated by the new direction taken by that group.

My country appreciates the efforts of the Afghan Government to pursue national reconciliation as a central theme of its political agenda, as well as the support of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for the efforts made by the country's authorities. The four initiatives aimed to promote inter-Afghan dialogue represent an important starting point for achieving peace and the consolidation of a political process that is Afghan-owned and includes diverse representation from all sectors of society.

In that regard, the participation of women remains a fundamental aspect in the building of an inclusive society. We are convinced that women's empowerment contributes to the promotion of human rights. We welcome the efforts of the Afghan authorities to implement the national plan of action on resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security. Through that initiative, the Afghan Government, with the support of the UNAMA, committed itself to ensuring that women could play a more important role in the areas of participation, protection, prevention, relief and recovery. We believe that to be the correct path.

My country welcomes the existing collaboration between President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah in carrying out the necessary electoral reforms agreed a year ago following the formation of the Government of National Unity. That step is essential to boost the confidence of the Afghan people in their institutions.

The security situation in Afghanistan remains fragile as the result of the actions of terrorist groups operating in that country and the region of Central Asia, which have persisted in their plans for destabilization. The continued presence of groups affiliated with the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) demonstrates once again the growing threat posed to the stability of the country by the fostering of terrorist activities. ISIS intends to expand its terrorist methods throughout

Afghan territory, as part of its strategy to expand and bolster its presence in the Middle East and North Africa by controlling drug-trafficking routes in the region.

ISIS efforts in the country have received a boost thanks to the incorporation of Taliban elements who disagree with the fighting methods of the new Taliban leadership. Reports indicate that about 10 per cent of Taliban insurgents are active supporters of ISIS, whose presence is a destabilizing factor for the region. The presence of ISIS is a worrying development that requires that the international community, in particular the Security Council, adopt robust measures to curb the flow of foreign terrorist fighters, who destabilize the country and fuel the armed conflicts in Iraq and Syria. The fight against terrorism requires the strengthening of the Afghan armed forces as a legitimate institution in guaranteeing the security of the State.

In addition to the danger of violent extremism, drug trafficking remains a serious obstacle to the country's stability and development. This illicit activity is the main source of financing for the Taliban and other criminal groups in carrying out their activities. The impact of drug trafficking on the region requires international cooperation, including neighbouring countries, to prevent, combat and eliminate this scourge. We recognize the efforts of the Afghan Government in this regard, which have been assisted by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Proof of this is the launch of the Afghanistan Drug Reporting System, which implements stricter controls while establishing the indicators needed to craft effective policies for the control and eradication of poppy crops.

The insecurity that persists in some parts of Afghanistan has a negative impact on the civilian population, which is the victim of indiscriminate attacks by terrorist groups. The number of people affected by armed violence has not decreased, as pointed out in the report (S/2015/684) of the Secretary-General. The fighting on the ground and targeted attacks make up the bulk of the violence with the greatest impact on civilians.

In that context, we regret the increase in the number of internally displaced persons this year, which at more than 100,000 is an increase of 77 per cent as compared with the previous year. The civilian population, including children, continue to pay a high price for the continuing fighting. We call on the parties to respect international humanitarian law and international human rights law and to protect children.

In another vein, we would like to highlight the enhancement of Afghanistan's relations with its neighbouring countries. That is a positive factor for the region. Dialogue and the various agreements established between Afghanistan and India, Pakistan, China and Russia, among others, reaffirm the need to strengthen those bilateral relations in order to promote cooperation in areas of common interest for the benefit of their peoples.

Finally, we encourage the Government of Afghanistan to continue its efforts to promote a comprehensive and inclusive political process leading to the establishment of a firm and lasting peace. That requires the participation of all sectors of Afghan society, with the support of the international community and the United Nations. In that regard, and pursuant to resolution 2210 (2015), we support the recommendations to the effect that UNAMA should continue its presence in Afghanistan in order to work in full coordination with the Afghan Government and its people with a view to bolstering its institutions.

Mr. Baublys (Lithuania): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, Mr. Nicholas Haysom, for his briefing. I also thank the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Mr. Yury Fedotov, for his briefing. I commend Ambassador Tanin for his statement and wish him every success in his new appointment.

A year ago, the coalition Government assumed its duties to lead a new transformation decade in Afghanistan for the period 2015-2024. That period is crucial to building a strong foundation for the State and to demonstrating firm national leadership and a sense of ownership. There is a sense of progress, albeit difficult and slow. Yet it has been marred by the fiercest fighting by the Taliban in many years, thereby undermining the regional integration of Afghanistan and leading to poor economic growth, corruption and weakness in the rule of law.

We echo the calls for bolder reforms that would underpin the importance of the rule of law, human rights, accountability and justice. We commend the Government's endeavours to continue with reforms and to finalize senior appointments. The public confidence of Afghans will grow with administrative reforms that

promote capacity-building in anti-corruption, political participation and the civil service. We regret, however, that nominations for the first female candidates for a seat on the Supreme Court and for the Minister of Defence were rejected by the Wolesi Jirga.

The United Nations has been in Afghanistan for over 50 years. At this stage, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), United Nations agencies and the international community remain important to the long-term stability of Afghanistan. UNAMA's field presence in remote regions of the country has been vital to achieving peace, self-reliance and growth. The Tripartite Commission, established under resolution 2210 (2015), has submitted its recommendations to the Council (see S/2015/713, annex). We look forward to discussing how best United Nations agencies can assist the country in the future. Too many of the challenges in Afghanistan are of a transnational nature, and we have just heard briefings in that regard. Therefore, increased emphasis on UNAMA's political good-offices role in the region will be required.

The increased and indiscriminate targeting of civilians by the Taliban and terrorists and their deep involvement in the drugs trade are very disconcerting. Civilian casualties continue to grow, and the conflict has become deeply entrenched. In just the past few months, the geographic scope of suicide bombings and complex attacks has spread beyond Zabul, Hilmand and Kabul to many other areas. Children have increasingly been killed, in disregard of international law, which prohibits attacks against civilians.

While we commend the resolve of the Afghan national defence and security forces, we underline the further need for the Government to maintain its focus on building the capacity of those forces. The NATO-led Resolute Support Mission, which is providing training, advice and assistance, plays a significant role in that regard. Exploratory negotiations between the Taliban and the Afghan Government — a step towards peace — has stirred hopes in Afghanistan. An inclusive peace deal should remain an ultimate objective, and we urge regional partners to support President Ghani's efforts and to follow up on the direct talks in July in Murree, Pakistan.

Security challenges undermine economic development, and poverty is rampant, as every third Afghan lives below the poverty line. The lack of economic opportunities and alternative livelihoods, the debts of farmers and the lack of access to credit have created fertile ground for the cultivation of poppies. Afghanistan accounts for a staggering 85 per cent of global opium production. We also note with concern Mr. Fedotov's warning about a sharp increase in drug addiction and the concurrent dangers of HIV/AIDS in Afghanistan. The launch of the Afghanistan Drug Reporting System on 23 June, in collaboration with UNODC and the Ministry of Counter-Narcotics, might prove to be a positive contribution.

Poverty goes hand in hand with illiteracy. Only 17 per cent of Afghan women are able to read. Afghanistan sadly ranks as one of the worst countries for women in terms of access to education and health care and pervasive domestic violence against women. The Afghan Government has taken some steps, and we welcome the launch of its national action plan on resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, for the period 2015-2022, as well as President Ghani's pledge to ensure women's participation in the peace process at all its stages. We also note the progress made towards the establishment of police women councils.

As was said earlier in this debate, restoring confidence in the electoral system and the independence of electoral bodies and the establishment of a voter registry are key. The agreement between President Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah to establish the Special Electoral Reform Commission is a welcome step. We urge Afghan leaders to set the date for parliamentary elections without delay.

Regional efforts to establish peace and stability will remain critical. We support the recently held Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan, the sixth such high-level ministerial meeting. Encouraging efforts have been made by Afghanistan and Pakistan, and we stress the importance of further constructive steps.

Lithuania has contributed to the multinational efforts in Afghanistan since 2005, and we will remain a steadfast partner to Afghanistan. We stand ready to support the people of Afghanistan. We look forward to resolute actions and strong leadership in Afghanistan, because the responsibility for the future of the country rests with Afghans.

Mrs. Ogwu (Nigeria): I thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this important debate. The Special

Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, Mr. Nicholas Haysom, and Mr. Yuri Fedotov, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, have provided us with profound insights into the situation in Afghanistan, and we are greatly in their debt. Ambassador Tanin has distinguished himself in the service of his country. We pray that his superlative performance will also be manifest in his new responsibility.

Afghanistan continues to make steady and striking progress under the reform agenda of President Ghani. The appointment of Cabinet members and other officials, including four women, to ministerial positions vividly demonstrates a determination and commitment to implementing crucial reforms, including the empowerment of women and the advancement of their rights. We welcome the Government's commitment to transparency and accountability. We believe that is vital to promoting good governance in Afghanistan. The re-establishment of the Electoral Reform Commission in July, designed to address fundamental issues of governance, as stated in the political agreement of 21 September 2014, is a notable development. We commend the Commission for its engagement with a broad range of stakeholders, including civil society. Progress in electoral reform is crucial to the solid establishment of democracy in Afghanistan. Electoral reforms that enhance transparency and inclusive governance are vital to engendering a united and secure Afghanistan.

On reconciliation, we applaud the initiatives launched by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) to promote dialogue at the provincial level in Afghanistan. Local reconciliation efforts constitute a vital building block for reconciliation at the national level. Therefore we urge the people of Afghanistan to embrace those initiatives.

Concerning security, we commend the Afghan National Security Forces for their success against insurgents operating in various parts of the country. The fact that they have prevented insurgents from holding any provincial capital attests to their capability to defend the territorial integrity of the country. We note that challenges remain in securing rural areas. That includes resupplying or reinforcing armed forces units in those areas. It is important that those challenges be urgently addressed in order to close the gaps that insurgents could use to establish a foothold, and thereby destabilize the country.

On counter-narcotics, we welcome the launch of the Afghanistan Drug Reporting System, aimed at providing access to data on key counter-narcotics indicators in Afghanistan. It is our expectation that that will significantly aid the war on drugs in that country.

We commend the efforts of the Afghan authorities in the eradication of opium poppy in the country. The 40 per cent increase in eradication between 2014 and 2015 underscores the progress that has been made in that important counter-narcotic effort. We express our condolences to the families of security officers killed in the course of counter-narcotic operations. Concerted national, regional and international action will be essential in order to sustain the war on drugs in Afghanistan.

While significant progress has been made in Afghanistan — across a broad spectrum of sectors — we admit that considerable challenges still exist. It is our expectation that the work of the Tripartite Commission will enhance the ability of the United Nations to help Afghanistan to meet those challenges. We pay special tribute to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Haysom, the UNAMA staff and Afghanistan's development partners for their dedication and commitment to placing the country on a sure path to peace, reconciliation and development.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of the Russian Federation.

We thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Nicholas Haysom, the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Mr. Yury Fedotov, and the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, Ambassador Tanin, for their briefings.

The situation in Afghanistan remains complicated. Unprecedented terrorist activity persists, and the number of civilian casualties as a result of the recent fighting has reached a steady, very high level. We are alarmed by the escalation in the internal political conflict in the country following the news of the death of Taliban leader Mullah Omar. In such circumstances, the prospects for a political settlement in Afghanistan, which seemed possible this past spring and summer, have become even more uncertain.

We are also concerned by the resumption of shelling from Pakistani territory along Afghan border regions,

which has resulted in the loss of civilian lives. We also continue to devote special attention to the situation along the border with Tajikistan, where militants control the Afghan districts of Imam Sahib and Dasht-e-Archi, in Kunduz province, and a number of districts in Badakhshan province. We are furthermore alarmed by the situation in areas bordering on Turkmenistan, where an attack in August against the head of counter-terrorist operations, First Vice-President Dostum, took place, along with armed attacks by Taliban fighters against Turkmen soldiers.

In addition to the presence of Taliban forces in the provinces of Faryab and Jowzjan — provinces bordering Turkmenistan — Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) groups remain active. There are reasons to expect a strengthening of ISIL, whose ranks currently number approximately 6,000 members and which has a presence in 25 of the 34 provinces of the country. Members include the Afghan Taliban and foreign fighters — which include Arabs, Punjabi Pakistanis, Waziristanis, Pashtuns, Chechens, Uzbeks and Tajiks. According to the Afghan intelligence services, over the past several months ISIL has established more than 10 training camps in order to prepare fighters throughout the country, and three of those camps are in the north.

Russia supports the policy of the Government of Afghanistan in implementing the concept of national reconciliation. We stand ready to assist in advancing the peace process, which includes a flexible approach to issues entailing a possible easing of sanctions established under resolution 1988 (2011) against the Taliban — if such an approach does not contradict Afghan national interests and adheres to the three well-known tenets of national reconciliation.

We hope that, after having almost completed the process of forming a new Cabinet, the leadership of Afghanistan will finally be able to tackle the problems that have accumulated in the country. Russia stands ready to forge constructive cooperation with the new leadership of Afghanistan in order to maintain the stability and independent policy course of the country as one that is free from terrorism and drug trafficking. We will continue to assist Kabul in the training of Afghan security forces through the relevant Russian authorities. Russia will continue that work bilaterally and in cooperation with international partners — despite the changed approaches taken by the United States, NATO and a number of Western countries regarding the implementation of joint projects with Russia to assist Afghanistan.

We view the current NATO Resolute Support Mission as a direct successor to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), which failed, unfortunately, over its 12 years of existence, to resolve a single one of the issues that it tried to deal with. It is our view that NATO's efforts in Afghanistan should be aimed at strengthening the national security sector and that NATO's leadership — pursuant to resolution 2189 (2014) — should continue to report its mission's activity to the Security Council at meetings on the situation in Afghanistan.

At the same time, we are forced to note that the new NATO mission has, at this stage, also not been able to achieve its objectives. Afghan security forces have suffered significant losses in fighting the opposition and have shown themselves, to date, to be incapable of independently holding off attacks — as was demonstrated by the renewed participation of United States military forces in combat operations in the south of the country.

We note the world's growing understanding regarding the importance of a regional context for an Afghan settlement, as well as an increase in the number of regional formats and platforms focused on Afghanistan. At the same time, we believe that it is important for countries in the region to play the primary role in carrying out activities according to those formats, especially as laid out by the Istanbul Process.

We are convinced that regional efforts to assist Afghanistan should be promoted mainly through tried and tested platforms, first and foremost the Shanghai Corporation Organization (SCO), into which we have incorporated virtually every country of the region, including Afghanistan, as member States, observers or dialogue partners. Russia welcomes Afghanistan's official request for SCO membership, which was submitted by the President of Afghanistan, Ashraf Ghani, during his meeting with the President of Russia, Vladimir Putin, on the margins of the SCO summit in Ufa.

Following the withdrawal of ISAF contingents, the problem of drugs — the illicit production and trafficking of which further destabilizes an already difficult situation both in the country and in the region in general — has deteriorated. The merging of criminal

activities related to Afghan opiates with international terrorism continues, thereby strengthening the financial position of those actors through drug revenues. Russia looks forward to a comprehensive discussion on the Afghan drug issue within the broader format of the upcoming special session of the General Assembly devoted to narcotics throughout the world in 2016.

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime's *World Drug Report*, Afghanistan remains the world leader in opium cultivation and production, accounting for 85 per cent of the total global volume. The total area under opium poppy cultivation in 2014 increased to 224,000 hectares. Opium production grows by more than 1,000 tons annually. Whereas in 5,500 tonnes were produced in 2013, the production in 2014 was 6,400 tons. According to forecasts by international experts, this year it will increase to 7,800 tons. One reason for that situation is the emergence of new, improved opium poppy strains, potentially making possible three harvests per year. The level of eradication of opium poppy cultivation remains low. In that respect, 2014 was an especially poor year. According to the 2015 Afghanistan Opium Survey, the number of drug users in Afghanistan has nearly doubled since 2012, to over 3 million individuals. Over 1 million of them are children under the age of 15.

United Nations experts believe that, following the withdrawal from Afghanistan of the main groups of the international coalition forces, the volume of Afghan drugs being trafficked along the northern route through Central Asia has increased. The situation is exacerbated by the fact that ISIL's leadership is attempting to seize control of Afghan drug trafficking in order to gain access to new sources of financing for its terrorist activities. There is evidence that ISIL fighters already control part of the illegal supply channels of drug shipments from Badakhshan province. In that regard, we believe that the Security Council must continue to carefully monitor and promptly respond to developments in the drug situation in Afghanistan. We would like to take the opportunity provided by the presence in the Chamber of the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime at Vienna, Mr. Yuri Fedotov, to express our support for the consistent efforts of the Office he leads in assisting Afghanistan to find an appropriate response to the problems posed by narcotics.

Furthermore, in the context of an Afghan settlement, we consider it important to take fuller advantage of the potential and practical experience of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), which since 2003 has been carrying out Operation Channel, aimed at suppressing drug smuggling routes, with the additional participation of the CSTO member States and counter-narcotics officers from agencies in Afghanistan, China, Iran, Pakistan, the United States of America and a number of other countries. Furthermore, a test of the operational readiness of the CSTO Collective Rapid Reaction Force to carry out counter-terrorist operations was conducted in May in Tajikistan and demonstrated the capacity of the armed forces of CSTO member States to combat attacks by fighters from terrorist and extremist groups.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of India.

Mr. Mukerji (India): We thank the Secretary-General for his report on the situation in Afghanistan (S/2015/684), Special Representative of the Secretary-General Nicholas Haysom his briefing and Ambassador Zahir Tanin for his statement.

India is proud to call itself Afghanistan's first strategic partner. We stand ready to do whatever is possible, within our capacities and our means, to work with the Afghan Government and its people to realize our common vision. We share the Afghan people's vision of a strong, independent, united and prosperous State.

We are happy to note that Afghanistan's historic political transition remains on course. The patience, forbearance, courage and democratic aspiration of the people of Afghanistan have strengthened that process. We are also happy to note that, in accordance with President Ghani's instruction to his Cabinet on 23 April, all ministries and executive branch bodies presented their 100-day strategies during the reporting period, with the exception of the Ministry of Defence.

Unfortunately, there is much that needs to be done on the security front. The Secretary-General's report substantiates our view that it is terrorism, and not tribal differences or ethnic rivalries, that is the main source of insecurity and instability in Afghanistan. The report mentions that the reporting period witnessed a significant increase in reports of intra-insurgent violence between the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and its affiliates with the Taliban. In

addition, the Secretary-General's report states that the majority of alleged ISIL-affiliated fighters appear to be drawn from disaffected former members of the Afghan Taliban, Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan or groups previously associated with Al-Qaida, such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. That is indeed alarming, and the Council must act against that threat with a sense of urgency.

The current increase in violence is taking place at a time when Afghanistan is in the midst of a sensitive and historic political transition under the leadership of His Excellency President Ashraf Ghani and His Excellency Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah. Given the critical phase that the political transition has entered and the deteriorating security situation, we feel there is a strong case for the international community to take a fresh look at the manner in which the drawdown of the international military presence in Afghanistan is taking place. We would also urge the Council to look into ways to curb terrorist organizations and block the transfer of finances from the illegal narcotics trade.

President Ghani has taken brave steps aimed at launching a reconciliation process with a view to bringing peace to his country. However, those efforts have been repeatedly rebuffed. The Secretary-General's report mentions that the deadly attacks in Kabul, which coincided with the emergence of a new Taliban leadership in early August, led President Ghani to call for urgent action by Pakistan against the Taliban, in particular action to prevent the use of its territory to prepare Taliban operations. India continues to support a truly Afghan-led and Afghan-owned reconciliation process within the framework of the Afghan Constitution and the internationally accepted red lines.

In view of the fragile security environment, it is important for Afghanistan to have a supportive and stable political environment for growth and development. Afghanistan is faced with huge developmental challenges. The eradication of poverty is a key priority for the Afghan Government. World leaders will adopt the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development a few days from now, thereby beginning a new chapter in our collective fight for a sustainable world without poverty and hunger. It would be useful for the Council to see how the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) can act to help Afghanistan achieve the objectives set out in the 2030 Agenda.

In our view, UNAMA must continue to play a leading role in shaping and coordinating the international community's efforts to assist Afghanistan's political and economic reconstruction process. UNAMA must also focus on the important role it plays in ensuring the delivery of valuable humanitarian and development assistance to Afghanistan.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan.

Ms. Lodhi (Pakistan): It is a pleasure to speak in the Security Council under your able presidency, Sir. We thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2015/684), and we greatly appreciate the briefings provided to the Council by Mr. Nicholas Haysom, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), and by Mr. Yuri Fedotov, the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime at Vienna. Likewise, it is always instructive to hear the remarks of our brother Ambassador Zahir Tanin of Afghanistan.

This debate is taking place at another crucial moment for Afghanistan and the region, as the country faces imposing economic, security and political challenges. In recent weeks, the security situation in Afghanistan has deteriorated significantly, with violent attacks in Kabul and across the country. Pakistan condemns all terrorist violence in Afghanistan. There can be no justification for such attacks, which kill innocent children, women and men.

In Afghanistan, as elsewhere, there are two possible paths to ending war and violence: a military victory over the insurgents or a negotiated peace. There is general consensus within the international community that peace can be best restored through a negotiated solution with the Afghan insurgency, led by Tehrik-e-Taliban. UNAMA's call earlier this morning for renewing direct engagement between the parties to the conflict is further confirmation of that approach.

Several avenues for reconciliation have been explored over the years, in Doha and elsewhere. Obviously, reconciliation and dialogue has to be between the Afghans themselves: it has to be owned and conducted by Afghans. External parties can facilitate reconciliation, but they cannot impose a solution.

My country's priority remains to defeat the terrorists whom we are confronting. They are responsible for

hundreds of attacks against civilian and security targets in Pakistan. They have killed over 64,000 of our citizens and security personnel, including innocent children at a school in Peshawar.

Our military campaign, Zarb-e-Azb, and Pakistan's multidimensional national action plan have degraded those terrorist groups and have flushed out and eliminated those trying to use our territory for their violent agendas. Their infrastructure in North Waziristan and adjacent areas has been destroyed. Their few remaining hideouts in the Shawal Valley and other isolated redoubts are under consistent and strong attack.

It was at the request of His Excellency President Ashraf Ghani that my country undertook to facilitate a dialogue between Kabul and the Afghan Taliban. Our sole aim was to establish direct contact between them and the National Unity Government. The first round of intra-Afghan talks was hosted in Murree on 7 July. Representatives of China and the United States observed those talks. The objective was to ensure transparency and impartiality. The outcome of that round was encouraging. Both the Afghan Government and the representatives of the Taliban agreed to continue the dialogue. A specific date, 31 July, was set for the second round of talks. But a few days before that date, there occurred certain developments, which are well known to all Council members and whose consequences were predictable. Those developments led to the rupture of what could have been a promising peace process. The Afghan Taliban was unable to return to the table. Equally inevitably, the level of violence in Afghanistan escalated, including a series of attacks that which claimed hundreds of innocent lives. Pakistan unequivocally condemned all those attacks. But we were shocked and saddened when some in Afghanistan chose to lay the blame for the escalating violence on my country. Our efforts to encourage the Taliban leaders to revive the dialogue should not be misconstrued as any form of endorsement for their revived violence following the scuttling of the intra-Afghan talks. There are vast uncontrolled areas in Afghanistan from where such violence emanates against both Afghan targets and against Pakistan.

Pakistan has refrained from responding to the allegations made by certain Afghan quarters. On the contrary, my Prime Minister dispatched our national security adviser to Kabul on 4 September to reaffirm Pakistan's desire to assist Afghanistan's reconciliation process as well as to take part in the sixth Regional Economic Cooperation Conference for Afghanistan.

We have declared that Afghanistan's enemies are also enemies of Pakistan. We should both be clear on who these enemies are. Those who are working overtime to sabotage and poison Pakistan-Afghanistan relations are really no friends of Afghanistan. Pakistan is very clear in its conviction that continued conflict in Afghanistan is not in our national interest. Peace in Afghanistan and cooperation with Kabul will enable us to fully defeat our common threat from violent groups. It will pave the way for the voluntary return of the millions of Afghan refugees we still host, which represents the most protracted presence of refugees in any single country in recent history. It will open the way for the ambitious plans for regional development and integration we have jointly worked for and on.

In conclusion, let me say that we seek peace, friendship and cooperation between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Mutual respect for each other's national interests and sensitivities must be the bedrock of our future relationship.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of Italy.

Mr. Lambertini (Italy): I, too, wish to thank Special Representative Haysom and Executive Director Fedotov for their briefings.

It is my duty to express the Italian Government's appreciation of the work of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in this third trimester and to renew our support for its mission, which is being carried out in difficult circumstances, often placing the staff and its safety in harm's way.

The security situation in Afghanistan continues to be alarming. UNAMA's mid-year report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict indicates the largest increase in the number of civilian victims since 2009, if not 2001. In recent weeks there has been a surge in terrorist violence by rebel groups, with brutal attacks in Kabul and other areas of the country. These criminal acts affect innocent victims, and we condemn them today, as we have in the past, in the most absolute terms.

I take this opportunity to reiterate Italy's full support for the efforts of the National Unity Government to secure peace, stability and development in Afghanistan. Our support takes the concrete form

of active participation in the non-combat Resolute Support Mission, led by NATO, as a framework nation for Afghanistan's western region.

In the few short months since our previous meeting here (see S/PV.7467) on UNAMA and the completion of the formation of the Government, we have seen encouraging results. The first recommendations of the Special Commission on Electoral Reform on adequate tax measures, for example, have led to an increase in internal revenue and a monetary policy in the framework of the Staff-Monitored Programme of the International Monetary Fund, as agreed with the Afghan Government.

The recent senior officials meeting on the refreshed Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework of 5 September in Kabul was very constructive, resulting in the establishment of clear indicators and deadlines in all of the sectors needing reform. These useful tools help build our confidence in the country's progress towards economic and social sustainability and further democratic consolidation.

The concrete implementation of Afghanistan's complex reform agenda under the self-reliance mutual accountability framework is now more than ever a fundamental goal for the sake of the Afghan people and in compliance with international agreements. I thus welcome the European Union's decision to accept the Afghan Government's invitation to host and co-chair the next ministerial conference on Afghanistan in Brussels, which we hope will be a landmark moment in the country's path towards self-reliance.

The promotion of the rights of women and children and protecting them from any form of violence must remain a priority. A milestone was clearly reached on 30 June with the adoption of the national plan on women, peace and security, pursuant to resolution 1325 (2000) of the Security Council. We also greatly appreciated the decision of President Ghani to present the candidacy of the first woman judge to the Supreme Court, although she was ultimately not appointed.

Efforts must continue in this direction. The data collected by UNAMA is dismaying in that it highlights an alarming increase, during the first half of the year, of 23 per cent in the number of women victims of conflict and of 13 per cent in the number of child victims. Action to strengthen women's empowerment in every sector of society, where Afghanistan has made undeniable progress, must continue, since there is still much work to be done. We thus strongly support the Afghan Government in its commitment to upholding women's and children's rights. We acknowledge this commitment and trust that the results obtained to date will be further consolidated and broadened.

A few months ago there were encouraging signs of a possible reconciliation process and a cessation of the violence in Afghanistan, such as the Murree meeting of 7 July, the first direct encounter between representatives of the Afghan Government and of the Taliban movement. Recent developments have renewed uncertainties about the future of this process.

It is our hope that genuine cooperation within the region, which is a prerequisite for ensuring peace and stability in Afghanistan, can be immediately established to help overcome the current difficulties. Italy will support, with strength and determination, any and all initiatives to this end.

Finally, I also take this opportunity to say goodbye to Ambassador Tanin, before I welcome him to one of the upcoming meetings on Kosovo issues. I have already had the opportunity to say to him today that as he is moving closer to my country, the quality of his food will improve in the coming weeks.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of Japan.

Mr. Yoshikawa (Japan): I wish to thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this important debate on Afghanistan. I also thank Mr. Haysom and Mr. Fedotov for their briefings. I take this opportunity also to pay tribute to my long-time friend, Ambassador Zahir Tanin of Afghanistan, who is leaving us very soon, for his great service to his country as well as to the United Nations. I wish him, as many have done, good luck in his new post in Kosovo.

As a former special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan of the Japanese Government, it is my great pleasure to speak on the situation in Afghanistan. Japan is proud to be one of Afghanistan's strongest supporters. We have been accompanying Afghanistan on its path towards reform and self-reliance. Japan's assistance, in the amount of $5.8 billion since 2001, has extended to a wide range of areas. We have worked with Afghanistan and its people in strengthening law enforcement and justice, infrastructure, rural development, human resources and agriculture.

Among the numerous forms of assistance we provide, I would like to focus today on one success story in the field of agriculture that illustrates Afghanistan's great potential for realizing self-reliance. Indeed, the key word in my statement today is "self-reliance".

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 37 per cent of Afghanistan's land is considered barren and thus infertile. Against this backdrop, in 2003, Dr. Nakamura, a Japanese medical doctor and director of the Japanese non-governmental organization Peace Japan Medical Services, launched a project in the Gamberi desert, in Nangarhar province, with the aim of transforming it into fertile soil.

I would like to draw the Council's attention to two photographs attached to my written statement, which has been circulated to members. What was a forbidding desert of 16,500 hectares in Nangarhar province in 2005, as seen in the first photograph, by 2012 had been, as can be seen in the second one, dramatically transformed into fertile croplands abundant in greenery. By utilizing eighteenth-century Japanese irrigation technology combined with Afghanistan's own traditional methods, the Green Ground Project succeeded in establishing a highly effective irrigation system. Relying on age-old skills, the new irrigation system was able to withstand the seasonal spring floods, which had impeded previous attempts.

The transformation did not stop there. Wheat production increased from almost zero to a capacity that is now able to feed more than 600,000 people. For those Afghans who had long fled from one destination to another, the transformation offered a place for them to finally settle and make a stable living. People began to enjoy greater job opportunities. Prior to that project, only 30,000 people had worked in agriculture in the area. However, in the span of 12 years, the number increased five-fold to 150,000. With vastly improved job opportunities, we began to see greater social stability and a significant reduction in crime. This past summer, when the Minister of Rural Rehabilitation and Development and the Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock observed what had taken place, they were at a loss for words. The transformation had far exceeded their expectations.

That extraordinary success story traces its beginnings down to the grass-roots level. It was initially funded solely by the aforementioned non-governmental organization, Peace Japan Medical Services. In 2010, the Japan International Cooperation Agency joined in providing technical and financial assistance. We are now looking at the possibility of cooperating with the Afghan Government and other organizations to disseminate the Peace Japan Medical Services model irrigation system to other areas of Afghanistan.

The story of the Gamberi desert is just one vivid example of Afghanistan's potential for realizing self-reliance. Japan firmly believes that, when the international community and Afghanistan work hand-in-hand, similar achievements are possible in other fields as well. Afghanistan has made great strides in its path towards self-reliance.

Nonetheless, political uncertainties and instability have been undermining its economic potential. Under such difficult situations, we look to the National Unity Government of Afghanistan to intensify its reform efforts. We look to the Afghan Government to tackle crucial challenges to sustainable growth, such as the need to improve security, strengthen political stability, eliminate corruption, achieve fiscal sustainability and promote electoral reform.

For its part, the international community seeks to reaffirm its commitment to providing necessary assistance under the principle of mutual accountability agreed in Tokyo. In that regard, we also extend our appreciation to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, which has been very ably led by Mr. Nicholas Haysom, for its meritorious efforts in successfully compiling the Tripartite Review Commission's report (S/2015/713, annex).

In conclusion, Afghanistan's path to self-reliance presents vast opportunities and important challenges. Nonetheless, the transformation of the Gamberi desert illustrates that Afghanistan is indeed progressing, step-by-step, towards a brighter future. Japan, along with the international community, stands ready to accompany Afghanistan on its path toward peace, prosperity and self-reliance.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Netherlands.

Mr. Van Oosterom (Netherlands): In view of time constraints, I will read out a shortened version of my statement. The full version will be available on Twitter.

I align myself with the statement to be made by the observer of the European Union.

First of all, I would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Haysom and Executive Director Fedotov for their briefings, and Ambassador Tanin for his statement.

I will make three points: the first, on security challenges; the second, on development and governance; and the third, on the functioning of the United Nations in Afghanistan.

In terms of security challenges and regional cooperation, the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) (S/2015/684) describes a worrisome increase in civilian casualties and a worsening overall security situation. The Kingdom of the Netherlands offers its condolences to the Afghan Government and its people for the lives lost in the many recent attacks by insurgent groups. We welcome the positive step of the direct talks between the Afghan Government and the Taliban held in Pakistan this past summer. In the long run, lasting stability and peace is possible only through reconciliation. We hope that the Afghan-led peace talks can resume quickly and continue to have the required support of the region.

The recent Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan in Kabul was an example of fruitful regional cooperation, as is the Heart of Asia Process. We express our appreciation for the initiative of the Governments of Afghanistan, the United States of America and China to organize a high-level side event on Afghanistan's peaceful reconstruction and regional cooperation during the upcoming week of high-level meetings.

Secondly, with respect to development assistance and good governance, the Kingdom of the Netherlands is satisfied with the outcome of the recent senior officials meeting in Kabul, in particular with the more concrete deliverables in the self-reliance through mutual accountability framework, such as the establishment of prosecution units for dealing with violence against women in all provinces, as well as the implementation of the Afghan national action plan pursuant to resolution 1325 (2000).

Furthermore, as the report of the Secretary-General on UNAMA highlights, the National Unity Government has made some significant progress in furthering good governance by improving accountability and reducing corruption. Also, the Special Electoral Reform Commission managed to achieve impressive results in a short time. However, a lot still needs to be done in order to ensure that future elections are fair, transparent and inclusive. The Netherlands will remain Afghanistan's partner in supporting that effort.

Thirdly, with regard to to the functioning of the United Nations in Afghanistan, we are happy to have received the report of the Tripartite Review Commission (S/2015/713, annex), which examines the role, structure and activities of all United Nations entities in Afghanistan. It is an important accomplishment that the report was compiled through good coordination among the entities in Afghanistan, the donor countries and, most important, the Afghan Government. The Netherlands supports the recommendations formulated in the report. We welcome the emphasis on having the United Nations continue its work to strengthen its good offices and the request to increase joint programming among United Nations entities. That is a responsibility that extends beyond UNAMA alone.

I would like to underline the Kingdom of the Netherlands' continued support for the coordinating role played by UNAMA to that effect. In particular, I would like to compliment UNAMA on the high quality of its work in Afghanistan in the field of human rights, which is recognized globally as an example of best practices for its robust methodology and constructive engagement with all parties to the conflict, as is also mentioned in the review. We also strongly support the recommendation to further emphasize the normative mandate of the United Nations in improving human rights and the rule of law in Afghanistan.

In conclusion, the Kingdom of the Netherlands has been a long-time partner of Afghanistan. We have contributed significantly in the fields of security, justice and development, and we will stand by the Afghan people in the years to come. We are currently examining our appropriate involvement after 2017. We will take into account the progress made by the Government of Afghanistan, and we underline, just as our Japanese colleague did earlier, the importance of self-reliance. We indeed hope that self-reliance will be achieved in this new era of increased Afghan ownership and leadership. It is in that spirit of partnership focusing on supporting peace, justice and development that we will continue to support Afghanistan and its people.

If I may, I would like to end on a personal note and pay tribute to the work of Ambassador Tanin, both for his efforts in his national capacity and in his efforts

aimed at reforming the Security Council. I wish him all the best and have to say that I will miss him as a friend.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Khoshroo (Islamic Republic of Iran): I would like to express my appreciations to you, Mr. President, and to the Russian presidency for holding today's debate on the situation in Afghanistan. I would also like to thank Ambassador Tanin of Afghanistan for his statement and to take this opportunity to pay tribute to him for his services to his country and wish him success in his new assignment. I would also like to thank Mr. Nicholas Haysom and Mr. Yury Fedotov for their valuable briefings.

Iran continues its full support for the promotion of security, stability and comprehensive and sustainable development in Afghanistan, inasmuch as we consider security in Afghanistan to be vital for the security of our own borders and the region. Because the assumption of full leadership is indeed a major step towards establishing peace and prosperity in the country, Iran continues to fully support the National Unity Government of Afghanistan and remains confident that it is well positioned and possesses the necessary capacities to address the political, economic and security challenges it faces.

The most recent report of the Secretary-General on Afghanistan (S/2015/684) indicates that, although the overall number of attacks shows a very slight decrease as compared to 2014, the sustained conflict has grown in both intensity and geographic scope. There was a visible spike in terrorist attacks in Kabul following the confirmation of the death of Taliban leader Mullah Omar. The deterioration of the security situation, especially in the north and west of Afghanistan, is a matter of concern. We condemn all violent attacks committed by the Taliban and all other terrorist groups, as well as any cooperation with them, since we believe cooperation would encourage them in their odious behaviour, and would therefore be counterproductive to the establishment of peace in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan should become the object of regional and international cooperation, rather than of competition, so that peace, security and development can be established and strengthened in the region. With the increasing prominence of Daesh and its affiliate in Afghanistan, along with the vast spectrum of terrorist and extremist groups, as the Secretary-General's report suggests, international and regional Powers have a greater responsibility to the National Unity Government and can reap enormous benefits from assisting it, especially in its fight against terrorism. Iran welcomes the statement by President Ghani concerning the signing of the joint comprehensive plan of action between Iran and its negotiating parties. We appreciate his characterization of the plan as an opportunity to strengthen peace, stability and economic cooperation in the region.

With respect to bilateral cooperation, we see the expansion of our political and economic ties with neighbouring Afghanistan as a priority. Iran stands ready to increase its bilateral cooperation, particularly on security matters, counter-narcotics efforts, development projects and economic cooperation in the fields of infrastructure and agriculture, as well as in efforts to find durable solutions for Afghan refugees.

There is great potential to be explored in the fields of trade and transit. We expect the tripartite agreement between India, Afghanistan and Iran on the Chahbahar port facilities to be finalized by the end of September. Access to that port would be very beneficial for Afghanistan as a land-locked country. The completion of the two ongoing railroad projects from Iran to the Afghan cities of Harat and Farah is also an important step in the enhancement of the economic activities between the two countries and within the region.

With regard to counter-narcotics efforts, we are particularly concerned about reports indicating that opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan has shown an increase in recent years. That increase is primarily due to the prevailing insecurity and poverty. It represents a real threat to the region and beyond and should be addressed by the international community in a very serious and comprehensive manner. In that context, we welcome the initiatives taken by the countries of the region, including China, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Iran.

Strong support and commitment from international donors, the Afghan authorities and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime are essential to deter the menace of drug cultivation and drug trafficking. Narcotics are not only a social health challenge but also, and more important, a major source of income for extremist and terrorist groups. Therefore, the international community should especially appreciate

and support the triangular initiative of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan on cooperation in countering narcotics. It is a useful initiative that will benefit Afghanistan as well as transit and destination countries, and must be supported by the international community.

Hundreds of thousands of Afghan refugees continue to live in Iran. We continue to participate in the work of the Tripartite Review Commission in order to plan for the voluntary, safe, dignified and gradual repatriation of Afghan refugees and the continued management of the refugee population in Iran. The decrease in voluntary repatriation underlines the importance of meeting the reasonable needs of repatriated refugees in Afghanistan so that that trend can be reversed, and underscores the need to mobilize more international support for that purpose. We also continue to support hundreds of thousands of Afghan students, from primary to university education, pending their eventual repatriation.

We support UNAMA, as well as United Nations agencies, in their efforts to provide development and reconstruction assistance to Afghanistan through robust regional engagement on issues such as border security, immigration, the return of refugees and drug control measures. The role of UNAMA should be further streamlined, taking into account the work of the Tripartite Review Commission, which is made up of the Government, as the main partner, and the international donor community, UNAMA and the United Nations.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of Sweden.

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): While Sweden fully aligns itself with the statement to be made on behalf of the European Union, we would like to make just a few additional remarks in our national capacity.

First, I would like to thank Mr. Haysom, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, for his comprehensive briefing on the worrying situation in Afghanistan and, more important, for the work he has been doing with his team on the ground. We take particular note of the continued fragile security situation and the intensity of the conflict. I would also like to take this opportunity to express my personal thanks and the gratitude of the Swedish delegation to Ambassador Zahir Tanin for his work here. He is a true example of how an individual can bring about positive change for his country. We have observed his work with great admiration and wish him good luck in the future.

I would like to focus on three points.

First, we welcome the results of the review of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) carried out by the Tripartite Review Commission, which will feed into the debate here in the Security Council. We would like to thank the National Unity Government of Afghanistan for its constructive contributions, and the UNAMA team for facilitating that process.

Sweden remains a dedicated supporter of UNAMA and agrees to the proposals put forward by the Commission concerning the future of its engagement. We are particularly pleased that the recommendations acknowledge the normative role of the United Nations in several important areas, based on the cardinal principles of transparency, participation and accountability. Afghanistan will need international support for the foreseeable future. UNAMA will therefore continue to have a role in donor coordination, the facilitation of humanitarian access and support for capacity-building for humanitarian response. UNAMA's physical presence in the country is critical to the effectiveness of the United Nations mandate and to the ability of United Nations donors to deliver and monitor assistance throughout the country, not least in the humanitarian field. Furthermore, it is essential that UNAMA's role in providing its good offices for peace and reconciliation be maintained, in order to help facilitate what must be an Afghan-led peace process that is inclusive and representative of the population. The participation of women in that process is particularly important. Unfortunately, the prospects for a peace dialogue, despite regional and international efforts, which we welcome, have been threatened by repeated attacks on the civilian population.

Secondly, recent events have brought with them a worrying number of civilian casualties and conflict-related displacement. Violence, in the form of suicide attacks, targeted killings and abductions, is part of the daily lives of millions of Afghans, and as is so often the case, women and children are in particularly vulnerable situations. That development is disturbing and must be countered. We are very concerned about the continuing violations of international human rights law and humanitarian law, which cause great suffering and despair. The universality of human rights must

not be compromised. It is important to ensure that the violations are ended and mechanisms for achieving accountability strengthened.

Thirdly, Sweden welcomes the recent senior officials meeting at which a framework for self-reliance through mutual accountability was endorsed. We welcome its strategic focus and the efforts made to increase Afghan ownership and ensure that development aid is spent as effectively as possible. We would like to commend the Government of Afghanistan for prioritizing work on human rights and gender equality. The refreshed framework reaffirms our mutual commitments and long-term partnership, but it also provides an important foundation for putting Afghanistan firmly on a path to self-reliance.

In conclusion, Sweden's support to Afghanistan is substantial and long-term. It began several decades ago and will continue, with a commitment of $1.2 billion throughout the transformation decade. The Afghan Government and people can count on our continued support regardless of the spiralling conflict. We condemn every attack on the civilian population and every effort to obstruct a meaningful dialogue on peace and reconciliation. It is time for an end to the violence that has plagued Afghanistan for too long. It is also time for reforms to be implemented. Our shared vision of a prosperous and self-governed Afghanistan, in which the Afghan people can fully enjoy their rights and freedoms as enshrined in the country's Constitution, depends greatly on it.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of Germany.

Mr. Braun (Germany): In the interests of time, I will try to be brief. Our thanks go to today's briefers. We believe that the Secretary-General's summary of the Tripartite Review Commission discussions (S/2015/713, annex) has come at the right moment. It helps to define the role of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) during the transformation decade, and the constructive role of the Afghan Government in drafting it is very commendable.

It is important to safeguard the achievements of the past decade while continuing on a path towards a more sustainable future for the Afghan people. The Government in Kabul has made remarkable progress in that area. At the same time, we deeply deplore the ever-growing number of civilian lives lost due to cowardly terrorist acts and incessant fighting, as well as the many casualties among the Afghan security forces in their fight against anti-Government factions.

We encourage the Government of Afghanistan to continue its efforts to implement the reform agenda presented at the London Conference in December of last year. The reform agenda should now be implemented more rapidly. Germany stands ready to support Afghanistan in that endeavour, and we second the call in the Secretary-General's report (S/2015/684) for all Afghan political leaders to confront those challenges in a spirit of national unity.

Development and security go hand in hand. Long-lasting peace in Afghanistan can be achieved only through an inclusive political process. In that regard, we welcome the recent peace talks and encourage participants and supporters to continue that dialogue as soon as possible. While we welcome Afghanistan's active participation in the work of the Human Rights Council, it is clear that the implementation of human rights, particularly women's rights, in all aspects of Government activity remains a challenge as well as an obligation for the Afghan Government. That includes supporting refugees as well as finding solutions that can enable them to return to their countries of origin.

A stable Afghanistan requires regional stability, and vice versa. We commend the Government of Afghanistan for actively strengthening ties with its regional neighbours, in, for example, the framework of the Heart of Asia Process, which Germany will continue to support. Germany would like to commend UNAMA for its work in Afghanistan. It played an especially crucial role during the last elections. For a democratic society to develop, it is essential that the Afghan people be able to cast their ballots in a secure, free and fair election process. In that context, we welcome the appointment of the Special Electoral Reforms Commission. Germany will remain committed to supporting Afghanistan in this crucial decade. We will very soon be introducing a new draft resolution in the General Assembly in support of Afghanistan and seeking approval for it from all Member States.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of Australia.

Ms. Bird (Australia): I would like to join others in thanking Special Representative of the Secretary-General Haysom and Executive Director Fedotov for their briefings, and also in welcoming the contribution of Afghanistan's Permanent Representative, Ambassador

Zahir Tanin. I echo others in wishing him well in his next assignment.

As we approach the first anniversary of the National Unity Government's formation, it is an opportune moment to acknowledge the leadership and resolve that President Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah have displayed and the progress that Afghanistan has made. In embarking on its transformation decade, Afghanistan has made genuine gains spanning the political, economic, security and social spheres.

Over the past year, however, the insurgency has continued to prey on civilians, with attacks that have killed and injured hundreds of non-combatants. The Afghan national defence and security forces have demonstrated bravery, spirit and dedication in defence of their nation. We reaffirm our commitment to supporting the Afghan Government in defending its citizens against the insurgency. Australia is providing financial assistance totalling $300 million over three years, through 2017. More than 25,000 Australian personnel have served in Afghanistan, and 400 continue to serve now.

Australia welcomes the positive steps the National Unity Government has taken to advance the cause of peace and reconciliation, including direct talks with the Taliban in Murree, Pakistan. Against a background of ongoing challenges, peace can be achieved only if reconciliation efforts are approached with a sense of purpose and pragmatism.

Australia was pleased to join with international partners this month in Kabul in endorsing the self-reliance mutual accountability framework. The commitments made by the Government of Afghanistan on human rights and empowering women and girls will build on the progress that has been made over the past decade. The full implementation of the law on eliminating violence against women and the national action plan on women and peace and security is an essential element of the reform agenda. We will continue to assist the Afghan Government by providing shelter and support for more than 2,300 women and girls and training for more than 2,800 police and justice-sector officials in upholding women's rights. Australia thanks and congratulates the National Unity Government on a successful first year in office and looks forward to continuing to work towards peace and prosperity in Afghanistan.

The United Nations has played an important and constructive role in Afghanistan since 1961. We welcome the work of the Tripartite Review Commission on future priorities for United Nations engagement in Afghanistan and encourage Council members to consider its recommendations in the lead-up to renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan in March 2016.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Thomas Mayr-Harting, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations.

Mr. Mayr-Harting (*spoke in Russian*): AS this is the first time that I address the Security Council this month, I want to congratulate you, Mr. President, and your country on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for this month.

(spoke in English)

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its member States. The candidate countries Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania; the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina; as well as Ukraine, Armenia and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

I thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (S/2015/684) on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security. I also thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, Mr. Haysom, for his briefing and assure him of our continued full support for his mission. I would also like to thank Ambassador Tanin for his statement and for the very good cooperation we have had over the years. We look forward to working with him closely in his new capacity.

I would like to reiterate the European Union's full support for the continued important role played by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), and all the United Nations agencies working to support the Afghan people and to coordinate the assistance provided by the international community.

The role of the United Nations in facilitating consensus and support for the National Unity Government's reform agenda has been particularly helpful when preparing the senior officials meeting held in Kabul on 5 September. The new self-reliance-oriented

mutual accountability framework provides important benchmarks and timelines for deliverables in key priority areas. It is particularly encouraging to see that the new framework includes indicators with regard to human rights, and in particular the rights of women and children, as well as indicators with regard to the continued development of accountable institutions and electoral reforms. With regard to the latter, the European Union welcomes the progress made by the Special Electoral Reform Commission, which has presented its initial recommendations. The capacity of Afghan institutions to deliver results that reach its citizens will make the difference.

The past months have seen a new spike in the exodus of refugees and migrants from Afghanistan, many of them well educated. Continuous insecurity threatens the progress made in stabilizing the country. It is all the more urgent that the Government of Afghanistan, with the support of the international community and all regional stakeholders, provide a secure and stable environment. We remain committed to Afghanistan. It is crucial that the Afghan people be able to regain confidence in the future, especially through the urgent implementation of reforms aimed at creating economic opportunities.

I am honoured to announce that the European Union accepts the invitation by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to co-host the next ministerial conference in Brussels. It takes Afghan leadership, along with continued international solidarity and support, to make this effort a success and to advance the long-term objective of Afghan self-reliance. On that path, the Brussels conference can send a strong signal of hope, confidence and change.

The Secretary-General's report highlights the sustained conflict, which has grown both in intensity and geographic scope. It recalls the continued and utter disregard on the part of the Taliban and other insurgent groups for Afghan lives. We need to be clear: the insurgency continues to plan and target attacks against Afghan civilians. The European Union condemns the insurgent groups that continue to directly attack civilians, democratic institutions and civil society, causing record numbers of casualties. It is also vital that humanitarian aid agencies and aid workers be allowed unhindered access to the most vulnerable affected population, in line with basic humanitarian principles.

The European Union is confident that the National Unity Government will prevail in the struggle, backed by all the support that we can collectively muster. The initiation of an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process remains the key objective. Earlier this year, we encouraged direct meetings between the Government of Afghanistan and representatives of the Taliban. We now face a deadlock owing to the continuous insurgency attacks. We call on all countries, especially on Afghanistan's neighbours, to support an inclusive settlement that eschews oppressive violence inflicted on so many Afghans, disavows any link with terrorism or terrorist groups and respects human rights, in particular the rights of women.

We welcome the launching of Afghanistan's national action plan on resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, for the period 2015-2022. We fully support the National Unity Government in that endeavour, and we have put in place a special support programme for the implementation of those efforts. We must protect the gains made by Afghan women since the fall of the Taliban regime, as their active involvement in rebuilding the State remains crucial. It is also our wish, with a view towards strengthening women's empowerment in all sectors of society, to see women actively involved in negotiations on the future of their country.

We believe that increased regional economic cooperation, in particular the development of intra-regional trade and infrastructure, will provide benefits to all of the countries in the region. We therefore support all efforts to maintain and improve such regional relations. So far, credit must go to President Ghani and other leaders in the region for their endeavours to reach out to each other.

Regional connectivity and improved economic cooperation can provide an important basis for stability and prosperity. The full implementation of the Afghanistan and Pakistan trade and transit agreement and other agreements can play a valuable role in stimulating economic activity. We continue to support the Heart of Asia Process and other processes that are owned by the countries in the region. We look forward to the concerted efforts of the main stakeholders to show leadership and invest both political and financial resources to that end.

In conclusion, let me say that the European Union will work with, and render support to, the National

Unity Government during this difficult transformation period, and will stand at its side while further promoting an inclusive dialogue on reconciliation and political participation. Lasting peace can come only with the constructive engagement of all neighbouring countries. The European Union will work with the leading members of the international community to support that outcome. UNAMA's role in promoting peace and security for all Afghans will be a vital one, and we reiterate its importance.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

Mr. Çevik (Turkey): Let me start by congratulating you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council and by thanking the Secretary-General for his report (S/2015/684) on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security. I also thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, Mr. Nicholas Haysom, and the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Mr. Yury Fedotov, for their briefings, as well as Ambassador Zahir Tanin for his statement. I also take this opportunity to pay tribute to Ambassador Tanin for his work on behalf of Afghanistan and to wish him every success in his new endeavours.

We welcome the successful continuation of the political transition in Afghanistan. In that context, we believe that the latest appointments at various levels of the State's bodies will further advance the productive and result-oriented functioning of the National Unity Government. We also welcome the Afghan National Unity Government's efforts to implement various reforms in the field of good governance, with special emphasis on the rule of law and fighting corruption. Those reforms will undoubtedly strengthen social cohesion in the whole country and help to strengthen trust in State structures.

Electoral reform is another area where the Afghan Government has initiated an important process. We expect the parliamentary elections to be held following the completion of the relevant reforms, which will further strengthen the functioning of democratic institutions.

In order to safeguard the achievements in Afghanistan over the past 14 years and to be able to build upon them, the international community's continuing support for Afghanistan during the 2015-2024 transformation decade is of the utmost importance. We commend the role played by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in coordinating the efforts of the international stakeholders in Afghanistan. We hope that the international community will continue to support the valuable efforts of UNAMA.

We fully support the Afghan Government's initiatives vis-à-vis the peace and reconciliation process. For the sake of lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan, we hope that those efforts will yield positive results.

With the understanding that the problems faced by the countries of the region, which include terrorism and organized crime, are of a transboundary nature, close cooperation among the regional countries is crucial in tackling those challenges. We therefore believe that the existing multilateral platforms should be used more effectively. In that regard, the Istanbul Process is as an effective cooperation model that is capable of providing practical solutions to the current challenges in the Heart of Asia region. When a climate of cooperation and solidarity prevails, it will be possible for the regional countries to benefit from the important economic potential of the region.

Turkey will continue its support to the Afghan Government in its endeavours to bring about peace, stability and prosperity to Afghanistan. Turkey's commitment to Afghanistan is long-term. With this understanding, Turkey makes comprehensive contributions to Afghanistan on both a bilateral level and through the United Nations and NATO. In the security area, Turkey will continue with its capacity-building programmes, both within the NATO framework and on a bilateral basis with the Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police. Turkey's development assistance programme for the Afghan people, which is the most comprehensive development aid programme directed towards another country in its history, will continue in the years ahead with a commitment of $150 million for the period of 2015-2017.

To conclude, I would like to underscore that lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan can be possible only within a regional framework that taps into the positive energy and increased cooperation of its neighbourhood.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of Slovakia.

Mr. Ružička (Slovakia): Slovakia would first like to align itself with the statement delivered earlier by the observer of the European Union.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (S/2015/684) and to welcome Special Representative Haysom and thank him for his briefing. Also, we carefully listened to the remarks of Mr. Yuri Fedotov, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime at Vienna. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Ambassador Tanin for his statement and, personally, for his excellent work and friendship during his tenure in New York.

A year ago in this very Chamber, I began my statement (see S/PV.7267) by calling upon the Afghan leaders to uphold their declared commitments, form a Government of national unity and take steps to stabilize the country. Today, I praise the National Unity Government and the leadership of Afghan politicians who have been able to work together in a constructive manner in their efforts to address the increasing political, economic and security challenges. The inspirational role of leaders in Kabul is irreplaceable and closely followed by the Afghan people. Only when the elite set an example can we expect the same attitude at other levels of the decision-making process. In that regard, I would like to express my appreciation for the four initiatives of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) to promote an inclusive Afghan-owned and -led dialogue in a number of provinces.

Also a year ago in the Chamber, many speakers included electoral issues among the mentioned challenges I just mentioned. Today, I commend the commencement of work by the Special Electoral Reform Commission, which is a sign that the National Unity Government is stepping forward to meet the agreed goals. We took note with admiration of the broad consultation process of the Commission, both in the capital and in the provinces, whereby it met with political, religious, civic and international leaders.

And also a year ago, I applauded the bravery of the Afghan people, who had gone to the polls to vote in April and June 2014. Today, we should make every effort to ensure that the elections scheduled for 2016 for the lower house of Parliament and for district councils take place. But for that to happen we need an improved security environment.

While Afghanistan's transition is on a good and promising path, security challenges continue to seriously threaten the transformation process. Despite the considerable progress made in ensuring security in the country, Government forces still face attacks by non-State armed actors. We are particularly deeply concerned by reports on the presence of groups associated with the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant in the eastern part of the country, as well as by the activities of scattered formations of foreign fighters. Both make the position of Government forces more complicated in addressing local incidents.

In terms of Afghan security, Slovakia continues to assist the country through the Resolute Support non-combat training mission. Its role in Afghanistan is vital, as it provides further training, advice and assistance for the Afghan security forces and institutions. In January, Slovakia commenced its three-year plan to financially contribute to sustaining the Afghan forces with $1.5 million. We will also provide further official development assistance.

Slovakia welcomes the initiative of President Ghani to unveil Afghanistan's new national drug action plan. We are awaiting the details of the plan as to how the international community may participate in addressing this acute problem.

The leaders of Afghanistan have shown their commitment to shaping a democratic and peaceful future for their country. The international community must not abandon them in these crucial years when terrorism is on the rise globally and when the wider region of Central Asia is dangerously threatened.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

The meeting rose at 1.25 p.m.